

2024 State of the State Proposal Summary

January 9, 2024



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Introduction

On January 9th, Governor Kathy Hochul presented her 2024 State of the State address, which included 204 proposals she hopes to accomplish in the year ahead. The sections that follow highlight proposals of interest to county governments. Many are expected to be included in Governor Hochul’s State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025 Executive Budget, which is set to be released on January 16th.

Agriculture

To support New York State's agricultural industry, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Provide expanded state investment for grants for on-farm milk storage technologies and processing infrastructure to mitigate transportation issues during periods of intense winter weather and road closures,
- Launch a new Alternative Waste Management and Enhanced Precision Feed Program that will further the mitigation of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, provide opportunities to sequester carbon, and scale assistance to meet unmet farmer demands,
- Direct Cornell University to create an agricultural workforce one-stop shop that includes office hours to take questions, webinars for information exchange, a web page for submitting questions, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) resource, and hotline information,
- Launch the County Fair Passport Program under which the Department of Agriculture and Markets will design, print, and distribute an agricultural fair passport booklet that will encourage attendance at county and youth fairs by allowing fairgoers to collect stamps at each fair they visit,
- Launch New York's Blue Food Transformation initiative to bolster marine agriculture, promote a healthy natural environment, and provide New Yorkers with a nutritious source of locally grown seafood, and
- Opt into the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program for Children (Summer EBT), providing more than \$200 million in federal benefits to an estimated two million children in New York State.

Civil Service Reform

To support the hiring of more state workers and alleviate the public sector staffing crisis, the Governor proposes to:

- Build on the HELP program, by directing DCS to pursue an expanded New York Hiring for Emergency Limited Placement Statewide (NY HELPS) program, so that agencies can fill vacancies open to the public permanently and better meet the needs of all New Yorkers, and
- Direct DCS will also work with local government stakeholders to evaluate additional titles used by local governments for the NY HELPS program to alleviate staffing crises in our counties, cities, and towns.

Economic and Workforce Development

To attract and grow businesses and support the workforce, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Launch a new round of the Focused Attraction of Shovel-Ready Tracts New York (Fast NY) Program to attract high-tech manufacturing to the state,
- Create the One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP) Network to offer credentials and training related to advanced manufacturing with a focus on providing opportunities for disadvantaged populations,
- Launch another round of the Restore NY Program to invest in neighborhood revitalization and business attraction,
- Advance legislation to allow municipalities and state agencies to use the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY)'s planning, design, procurement, and construction management services for a wider range of projects,

- Establish the Small Business Environmental Support Office (SBESO) to assist small businesses with a wide range of environmental regulations, including those involving water, air, waste, and bulk storage,
- Direct Empire State Development (ESD) to create a one-stop shop to help immigrant small business owners access services offered by ESD and other state agencies,
- Introduce legislation requiring all breaks for breast milk expression under 20 minutes be paid,
- Establish a Youth Apprenticeship model to create an alternative career path for students who may be unable to pursue traditional post-secondary education,
- Launch a pilot Registered Apprenticeship Program with a path to a permanent State position upon completion,
- Launch the Office of Workforce Data and Research to monitor and measure data from educational institutions, employers, and workforce development programs,
- Direct the Department of Labor (DOL) to develop and issue guidance and best practices for employers to ensure the safety of their workers in extreme heat, poor air quality, and extreme precipitation, and
- Establish the Empire Artificial Intelligence (AI) Consortium to drive research and innovation.

Environment and Energy

Governor Hochul put forth a series of proposals to protect New Yorkers from extreme weather, support the transition to clean energy, and safeguard our state's water resources.

To protect homes, communities, and infrastructure from extreme weather, the Governor proposes to:

- Launch the Resilient and Ready Program within the Division of Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) to create a flexible fund that can be used to fortify and repair homes in flood-prone areas,
- Create a Blue Buffers program to encourage voluntary buyouts in communities most vulnerable to flooding,
- Update building codes and standards to enhance resiliency,
- Develop a comprehensive adaptation and resilience plan to ensure state entities and local government can equitably adapt to climate change,
- Release climate projections from the NYS Climate Impacts Assessment to inform climate adaptation work,
- Direct the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) to supply counties and municipalities with additional generators, high-flow pumps, and flood barrier technology,
- Update Coastal Erosion Hazard Area (CHEA) maps and make them available in an electronic format,
- Create new tools to help communities prepare for climate impacts, including an interactive web-based drought prediction tool, urban heat island mapping and modeling resources, a projected floodplain mapping tool, and an update of the State's stormwater design manual,
- Launch a Green Resiliency Grant Program to fund green infrastructure projects, including green rooms and permeable pavement,

- Create the Resilient Watersheds Implementation Grant Program to fund flood mitigation projects,
- Establish a grant program within the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to restore or remove hazardous municipal and State-owned dams,
- Expand Climate Smart Communities Grant Program by increasing financial support for disadvantaged communities that cannot meet the statutory 50% match requirement, and
- Update the regulatory scoring method for funding clean water infrastructure to prioritize asset management and climate resiliency.

To facilitate the transition to a clean energy economy and provide New Yorkers utility bill savings, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Introduce the Renewable Action Through Project Interconnection and Deployment (RAPID) Act to create a one-stop-shop for the environmental review and permitting of major renewable energy and transmission facilities within the Office of Renewable Siting (ORES),
- Launch Statewide Solar for All to provide the 800,000 low-income households enrolled in the utility-managed Energy Affordability Program with electric bill credits from Community Solar,
- Propose the Affordable Gas Transition Act to support responsible, equitable, and effective gas system transition planning,
- Launch the Smart Energy Savings Initiative to integrate utility and State-led energy management programs in a way that maximizes cost and energy savings for New Yorkers,
- Direct the Department of Public Service (DPS) to initiate the New York Grid of the Future proceeding, which will identify smart grid technologies that can be deployed to achieve clean energy goals at a manageable cost, and
- Direct the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to launch a study to analyze the benefits of a Clean Transportation Standard in New York State.

Finally, to protect our water resources, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Direct the Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) to increase water infrastructure grants for small rural communities from 25% to 50% of net eligible project costs,
- Increase free technical assistance for communities to develop and implement drinking water source protection plans, and
- Provide engineering planning grants for drinking water projects that address emerging contaminants like PFAS and lead service line replacement.

IT / Cyber Issues

To address the growing threat of cyberattacks, the Governor proposes to:

- Grow the New York State Joint Security Operations Center through the expansion of the Shared Services Program,
- Extend eligibility for the EDR shared service to include the two largest municipalities from each county outside of New York City, and
- Add Attack Surface Management (ASM), to the Shared Services Program as a complement to the EDR tool. ASM is a capability for discovering internet-facing

computers and analyzing them to determine if any are currently in a vulnerable state that might be exploited by hackers.

General Government

Courts

To meet growing demands on the courts, the governor proposes seeking a constitutional amendment eliminating the cap on State Supreme Court Judges.

Higher Ed

To advance equity and help retain graduates within New York State and its higher education institutions, the Governor proposes to automatically admit the top 10 percent of high school classes to SUNY and CUNY schools.

Elections

To increase campus voter participation the Governor proposes to require SUNY to include information in residence packets when students apply for on-campus housing about how to change a voter registration address if students wish to do so, as well as information about how to vote. SUNY and CUNY will also include voter registration links on their student portals and send notifications as the voter registration deadline approaches.

Recreation

To promote swimming in New York State, the Governor proposes to provide \$60 million in competitive grant funding to municipalities for the deployment of innovative, floating pools that can allow New Yorkers to safely swim in natural bodies of water. The New York State Department of Health will provide guidance that will allow organizations to test the feasibility of innovative swimming pool designs within the state's natural waters.

Infrastructure

Governor Hochul proposes to advance legislation to allow municipalities and state agencies to utilize DASNY's planning, design, procurement, and construction management services for a wider range of projects. DASNY's enhanced scope will include projects funded in whole or in part by State programs such as the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, NY Forward, and the Environmental Bond Act of 2022, as well as by the federal government through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

Housing

To address the housing affordability crisis, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Establish a \$500 million fund to support infrastructure and other needs that are required to prepare state-owned sites for housing development,
- Enact a replacement for the 421-a tax abatement program in New York City,
- Give the City of New York the flexibility to increase residential capacity through greater density allowances,
- Provide incentives for below-market housing in conversions of unused commercial office space,

- Authorize the City of New York to create a path for the legalization of basement apartments,
- Protect Section 8 tenants from voucher discrimination, and
- Prohibit insurance companies from refusing to insure affordable housing.

Public and Mental Health

To tackle the mental health crisis, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Open 200 new psychiatric inpatient beds,
- Provide funding for Intensive Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams to deliver around-the-clock support to individuals with serious mental illness, and
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement for mental health services in public and private facilities. Today, Medicaid typically pays a higher rate for mental health services offered in an Office of Mental Health (OMH) licensed Article 31 facility than for services offered in a Department of Health (DOH) licensed Article 28 facility or a private physician practice. To expand access to mental health care within DOH facilities and private practices, New York will increase support for mental health services in these facilities.

To strengthen the healthcare workforce and protect public health, the Governor proposes to:

- Increase training, education, and recruitment programs for healthcare workers statewide,
- Advance legislation to expand scope of practice for certain healthcare professions, including allowing medical assistants to administer immunizations,
- Propose legislation to allow pharmacists to administer vaccines, screen, and dispense medication for MPOX and PrEP and expand the role of registered nurses to facilitate Hepatitis B testing,
- Require labs to report all negative HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C test results to improve targeted interventions and address gaps in testing and propose legislation to make HIV testing a routine part of an annual visit,
- Convene a Health Systems for Gun Violence Prevention Taskforce charged with focusing on data infrastructure, firearm injury risk assessment screening, and hospital violence intervention strategies, and
- Propose legislation to eliminate cost-sharing for insulin for all plans under the Department of Financial Services (DFS)'s regulatory authority.

Finally, to combat the opioid epidemic, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Prioritize key initiatives with opioid settlement funding, including programs to support and bolster the addiction workforce and investments in the most vulnerable and underserved communities,
- Propose legislation to update the State's controlled substances schedule to include new fentanyl analogs, xylazine, and other prescription medications,
- Launch a robust, multi-faceted anti-stigma campaign to raise awareness about opioid use disorder and the services needed to support those in need, and
- Introduce legislation to permit health care providers in emergency rooms to dispense up to a three-day supply of buprenorphine and increase funding for treatment in the State's Essential Plan.

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

To combat and prevent crime, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Increase funding for the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP) administered by the Office of Children and Family Services to support intensive, wraparound case management, and programming to deter criminal acts, and
- Introduce legislation to strengthen the Cannabis Law to better enable the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) and local government agencies to seal or padlock an unlicensed cannabis business,
- Launch a Law Enforcement Joint Operation on Retail Theft to combat organized retail theft crime and coordinate the response of law enforcement agencies and prosecutors,
- Fund dedicated retail theft teams in district attorneys' offices, and
- Share data, intelligence, and evidence with local law enforcement to enhance the investigation and prosecution of retail crimes across state jurisdictions.

To modernize emergency medical services (EMS) and reduce unnecessary emergency room (ER) visits, Governor Hochul proposes to:

- Advance legislation to make EMS an “essential service” under state law, ensuring that emergency medical service providers are required to respond to emergencies,
- Create five EMS zones that will maintain their own workforce to augment local EMS agencies where the workforce is insufficient and respond to emergencies statewide,
- Establish a Paramedic Telemedicine Urgent Care Program that will use paramedics in rural areas and a telemedicine healthcare provider to deliver low-acuity emergency services, and
- Introduce legislation to allow hospitals that meet certain requirements in New York to deliver care in patient homes as appropriate and to permit EMS providers to provide care in the community during nonemergent situations.