



Meeting the Moment: Federal Cuts & Colliding Crises

2026 State Legislative Platform

This legislative session opens under the shadow of severe federal cuts to housing, healthcare, and food assistance – decisions that will deepen inequality and worsen homelessness, overdose deaths, and poverty across New York. Meeting this moment requires more than opposing federal attacks; it demands bold, coordinated action to ensure housing, healthcare, economic security, and dignity for all.

Every night, over [150,000 New Yorkers](#) sleep in shelters or on the streets, with tens of thousands more doubled- or tripled-up. Black and brown communities, older adults, and low-income households face the harshest impacts of rising evictions, discrimination, and a shrinking supply of affordable housing. Among homeless New Yorkers, overdose remains the leading cause of death.

When mental health needs go unmet, people in crisis encounter police instead of care too often. Our systems criminalize poverty and suffering, eroding trust in programs meant to protect communities.

New York's prisons remain in crisis, defined by racist brutality, inhumane conditions, and deaths by incarceration. Each year, more than [188,000 people](#) return from jails and prisons facing extreme vulnerability. They are [129 times more](#) likely to die from overdose and [ten times more](#) likely to experience homelessness than the general population, yet are often released without housing, healthcare, or employment, creating critical barriers to survival.

For the first time since the pandemic surge, expanded harm reduction efforts have begun to slow overdose deaths. But progress is uneven: Black, brown, and low-income New Yorkers still die at the highest rates, and thousands continue to lose their lives to preventable overdose each year. Federal attacks on Medicaid, the dismantling of public health institutions, and political opposition to harm reduction now threaten to erase these gains.

These crises are solvable and how we move forward in this moment is more important than ever. New York leaders must reject using marginalized residents as bargaining chips and refuse to let political rhetoric dictate policy. State lawmakers must act now to stabilize the social safety net, implement and protect proven solutions, and guarantee equitable access to safety, care, and opportunity for every New Yorker.

PROTECT AND IMPLEMENT PROVEN SOLUTIONS:

Drug Checking Services (Fernandez/Kelles) [S56/A808](#): Drug checking programs provide critical information in the context of an unstable drug supply, allowing people to make safer decisions – which can save lives. This bill grants immunity to all parties involved in drug-checking infrastructure.

HIV Housing for NY (Bronson) [A3355](#): Expands the state rental assistance currently only available to HIV-positive New Yorkers within NYC to the rest of the state, with a 30% rent cap, ensuring permanent access to the HIV Emergency Shelter Allowance program for low-income New Yorkers living with HIV facing homelessness statewide.

#WiFi4Homeless (Gonzalez/Reyes) [S4561A/A1755](#): Requires temporary housing and shelters to provide reliable internet access for residents, critically improving their ability to search for housing, employment, government benefits, and medical care. Ensures local social service districts are fully funded for costs.

Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) Implementation: The HAVP pilot, beginning March 2026, must be fully funded and have a successful distribution of vouchers. The program prioritizes New Yorkers who are homeless or at risk, including individuals and families often excluded from other assistance programs. During the pilot, HAVP will increase access to stable housing and reduce homelessness, with the goal of expansion to a fully funded, permanent statewide rental assistance program.

Daniel's Law (Brouk/Bronson) [S3670/A4617](#): Removes police officers as first responders to people experiencing mental health or substance use crises, allowing social workers, mental health counselors, peers, and other health professionals to serve as first responders.

RAISE REVENUE TO STABILIZE THE SAFETY NET:

Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Recovery (SUPER) Package: Legislators must reject any attempt to supplant Opioid Settlement dollars. These funds, won on the backs of loved ones lost to overdose, must expand capacity to address the crisis, not serve as a government "slush fund." Instead of using settlement dollars to backfill federal funding shortfalls, the following package of other revenue streams should be used to cover federal cuts and stabilize the substance use continuum and harm reduction infrastructure.

Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Recovery (SUPER) Package:

Strengthening the Drug Treatment and Public Education Fund (Fernandez) [S8637](#): Updates allowable spending under the the Drug Treatment and Public Education Fund created by the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act to include drug user health, culturally competent treatment, and recovery services. Strengthens transparency through an annual public report on expenditures, and remaining fund balances.

Alcohol Excise Tax (Fernandez/Levenberg) [S4595/A9318](#): Establishes a 5% excise tax on alcoholic beverages sold at retail or on premise with revenue directed to the New York State Drug Treatment and Public Education Fund.

Redirecting the Opioid Excise Tax (Fernandez/Levenberg) [S7641/A9311](#): Redirects the Opioid Excise Tax from the General Fund to the Drug Treatment and Public Education Fund.

Taxing the Ultra-Rich to [Invest in New York](#):

Making our Income Taxes More Progressive (Jackson/Meeks) [S1622/A1281](#): Adds 10 new brackets to New York's personal income tax so the top 5% of earners pay their fair share, raising over \$21 billion annually.

Implementing a capital gains tax (Rivera/Kim) [S1439/A676](#): Adds a surcharge on income over \$500,000 earned through capital gains, ensuring the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share, raising \$12 billion annually.

Raising corporate taxes on the most profitable corporations in NY (Kelles) [A1971](#): Ensures companies with over \$2.5 million in profits pay what they owe, raising \$7 billion annually.

Creating an heirs tax (Brisport/Solages) [S914/A2049](#): Overhauls the inheritance tax system to tax inheritances over \$250,000, raising \$4 billion annually.

Taxing Billionaires' Wealth: Creates a yearly tax on accumulated assets

Create Pathways to Release & Stability:

On December 10, 2024 Robert Brooks was killed by guards in Marcy Prison on video, exposing the broader public to the racist brutality those of us who are formerly incarcerated experienced, witnessed and have been trying to raise the alarm about for decades. This is a system designed to abuse, oppress and exploit us. While more and more New Yorkers have become aware of the crisis in New York State Prisons, only one real solution exists: creating just pathways to release, which forms the basis of our demands for 2026.

Parole Reform: Elder Parole (Cleare/Davila) [S454/A514](#) & Fair and Timely Parole

(Salazar/Weprin) [S159/A127](#): These bills would allow parole consideration for people aged 55+ who have served at least 15 consecutive years and ensure that the parole release process is based on who people are today and their many accomplishments in prison, not their crime of conviction. Older individuals, including those convicted of serious crimes, have the lowest recidivism rates of any age cohort and pose minimal public safety risk.

Sentencing Reform: Second Look Act (Salazar/Walker) [S158/A1283](#) & Earned Time Act

(Cooney/Kelles) [S342/A1085](#): These bills would enable judges to reconsider excessive sentences and strengthen and expand "good time" and "merit time" laws to encourage rehabilitation and family reunification.

Wrongful Convictions: Challenging Wrongful Convictions [S6319](#)/A7422A: Establishes a legitimate pathway to exoneration for people with new evidence. Provides counsel, the right to appeal, a hearing, and evidence review. Allows those who pled guilty to seek relief on actual innocence grounds.

Rights Behind Bars (Salazar/Forrest) [S3763/A1261A](#): Implements basic human rights standards for incarcerated individuals and their families, addressing longstanding abuse and mistreatment in correctional facilities.

Reentry Assistance (Parker/Gibbs) [S6222/A6990](#): creates a legitimate reentry fund, and provides individuals a transition payment during the first six months post-release, to address vital needs such as food, clothing, treatments, and utilities and to prepare for employment.