

WOODSIDE HERALD

SERVING SUNNYSIDE-WOODSIDE AND LONG ISLAND CITY

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FREE

YOUTH LED INITIATIVE



Youth on the Move has been ringing in the New Year with action! An offshoot of Woodside on the Move, Youth on the Move (YOTM) is a newly-formed youth-led initiative with the goals of providing Queens and New York City youth with a platform to speak on and address local community issues. Even though Youth on the Move has only officially launched in late October 2021, they already have over 40 members hailing and have been instrumental in the success of multiple events and initiatives such as the Woodside on the Move's Annual Toy Give-away and Holiday Tree Lighting, as well as multiple food and gift distributions all around Western Queens.

"Youth on the Move was created to promote volunteerism, community involvement, civic engagement, and youth empow-

erment," said John Bahia, Public Affairs fellow at Woodside on the Move and one of Youth on the Move's founding members. "I was talking with fellow interns and volunteers about the lack of opportunities for young folks to get involved in our local communities, and we decided to form an initiative, led by the youth and for the youth, in which young people from many different backgrounds all around Western Queens and New York City can address and confront the issues impacting the youth and our communities as a whole."

With a wide range of Youth, Youth on the Move comprises local youth from 15 to 25 years old with a diverse set of skills and passions. "To accomplish more outreach to New Yorkers who are most vulnerable and tackle issues of food insecurity and housing

through our initiatives," is a goal of one Youth on the Move member, Jonathan Rampagoa. Jonathan, a junior at Bard High School Early College, is just one example of the passionate, ambitious members at Youth on the Move.

"We started out as six young adults who wanted to create an organization that helps families during this difficult time, and now we have about 50 members, demonstrating how much we (YOTM) are making a difference in the community I am proud of everyone who has joined and is active in the organization," reflects Jocelyn Vaquero, currently a student at Baruch and one of the founding members.

Youth on the Move hopes to be a steady presence in the Western Queens community. Their most recent work includes a

series of "Fridge Drive-Bys" that they documented on their Instagram profile, @youthonthemovenyc. So far they have filled up 13 local community fridges in Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.

Community fridges popped to address the dire food insecurity crisis that arose during the pandemic, but often these fridges have little to no food. However, within two days, Youth on the Move filled these fridges with food provided by local restaurants and community partners. Fahim Towid, a senior at Long Island City High School reflected on his participation in these drive-bys, "To be able to help the community by filling these fridges and to meet people that we were able to help first hand was so eye opening and made me want to be more active and to do more for the community."

TRUCK AND BUS DRIVER SHORTAGE

Governor Kathy Hochul announced a plan to help address a critical shortage of truck and bus drivers by significantly expanding the availability of road tests for Commercial Driver License (CDL) applicants. The initiative would allow qualified third parties to offer the road tests, which would create more testing locations statewide and expand capacity at the existing state-run sites, reducing the time it takes to get qualified CDL drivers on the road.

The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, January 26, to hear and review comments on the plan. The hearing will take place virtually via WebEx from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. It will be open for public comments following a brief introduction by DMV representatives. Written

comments may be submitted to CDLThirdPartyTesting@dmv.ny.gov from January 18 to February 4.

"As we continue to fight this pandemic, we remain committed to expanding opportunities for New Yorkers, supporting our schools, and doing all we can to address the supply-chain issues that have affected many businesses throughout our state and country," Governor Hochul said. "By enabling third parties to give the road test for truck and bus drivers, we will create new avenues for New Yorkers to begin exciting careers, for our children to get to school, and to ensure that vital goods get where they need to be."

During the public hearing, the DMV will provide an overview of the proposal that calls for a phased roll out of this initiative that would initially allow other

state agencies and authorities that have large fleets of commercial vehicles to begin conducting CDL road tests. The second phase would include qualified private entities. The DMV will establish a rigorous monitoring system to ensure that qualified CDL trainers safely administer the road tests in compliance with state and federal regulations. The DMV will use the feedback gathered during the public hearing to evaluate and develop an implementation plan. This new proposal is part of a series of actions taken by the State under Governor Kathy Hochul's leadership to remove barriers and recruit more drivers. In September, Governor Hochul introduced a variety of measures by multiple state agencies to address a shortage of school-bus drivers.

As part of that effort, the DMV expe-

ditioned the process for obtaining a CDL by removing the 14-day waiting period between the permit test and the road tests. The state also increased capacity to administer road tests and, through cooperation with county-operated DMV offices, to increase testing capacity for written exams.

In addition, New York opened new CDL Driver Testing sites by partnering with SUNY, the Thruway Authority, New York Racing Association, and the Office of General Services to use large lots on their various sites for the road test. For school staff who held an existing CDL, the State set up expedited testing to obtain a permit that allows them to drive vans and buses temporarily.

Those interested in obtaining a Commercial Driver License can find more information at <https://dmv.ny.gov/commercial-drivers>.

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7 TIPS IN MANAGING YOUR EVERY DAY STRESSES AND ANXIETIES

by Stan Popovich

- Everybody deals with stress and anxiety, however the key is to know what to do when you’re stressed out. It is not always easy to keep your feelings from getting the best of you. With this in mind, here are seven tips that a person can use to help manage their daily stresses and anxieties before they get out of control.
- 1. Get all of the facts of the situation:** Gathering the facts of a certain event can prevent us from relying on exaggerated and fearful assumptions. By focusing on the facts, a person can rely on what is reality and what is not. Most importantly, do not focus on your fearful thoughts when your stressed out.
 - 2. Take a break:** Sometimes, we get stressed out when everything happens all at once. When this happens, a person should take a deep breath and try to find something to do for a few minutes to get their mind off of the problem. A person could take a walk, listen to some music, read the newspaper, or do an activity that will give them a fresh perspective on things.
 - 3. Carry a small notebook of positive statements with you:** Another technique that is very helpful in managing fear is to have a small notebook of positive statements that makes you feel good. Whenever you come across an affirmation that relaxes you, write it down in a small notebook that you can carry around with you in your pocket. Whenever you feel depressed, open up your small notebook and read those statements.
 - 4. You can’t predict the future:** While the consequences of a particular fear may seem real, there are usually other factors that cannot be anticipated and can affect the results of any situation. We may be ninety-nine percent correct in predicting the future, but all it takes is for that one percent to make a world of difference.
 - 5. Challenge your negative thinking with positive statements and realistic thinking:** When encountering thoughts that make you fearful or depressed, challenge those thoughts by asking yourself questions that will maintain objectivity and common sense. Focus on the reality of your situation and not on your thoughts. Your fearful thoughts can make things worse so try to focus on something positive when you get anxious.
 - 6. Divide your activities into separate steps:** When facing a current or upcoming task that overwhelms you with a lot of anxiety, divide the task into a series of smaller steps and then complete each of the smaller tasks one step at a time. Completing these smaller activities will make the stress more manageable and increase your chances of success.
 - 7. Take advantage of the help that is available around you:** There are many individuals who have been expertly trained in the field of psychology to help you find ways to manage fear and anxiety. Seek out someone whom you trust to provide sound advice and guidance. This same professional can also help you create an action plan for dealing with your fears and anxieties in the future.

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MLK DAY: REMEMBRANCE AND RECOMMITMENT

by Dr. Sharon M. Cadiz

In 2022, the struggles of our Nation are as compelling and urgent as they were when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. walked the Earth and preached a message of justice, unity and peace. We are reminded of him and his message every year since his birthday first became a national holiday on January 20th 1986. For many, the holiday probably seems like it was always there as a day of remembrance and celebration of his life, but like most things that are important, it was not readily accepted and equally held in high regard. The day was not celebrated in all of the fifty states until 2000. Acknowledging this fact, makes it a bit easier to understand how it is that we have not been able to coalesce to arrive at a shared commitment to a public health strategy to address the COVID 19 pandemic. In addition to the recurrent issues related to the pandemic, there is the ever widening disconnect across political, racial, economic and ideological lines. We can easily become overwhelmed and discouraged by the multiple layers of dissention and resistance that mark the current state of our troubled union, but then there is MLK Day that stands as evidence that even though it may take time, we can have confidence in the fact that we can overcome differences and unite for positive change.

Just as with the civil rights movement that continues to evolve with Black Lives Matter and voting rights challenges, the COVID crisis continues to evolve; morphing into new strains and new threats. Both the civil rights movement and COVID struggles have cost lives and continue to heighten the sense of polarization that shows up, as often around the dinner table or over coffee, as on the floor of Congress and the Senate.

A war of wills and the pursuit of right and wrong can suspend us in a perpetual state of conflict, if we find ourselves incapable of rising above our differences in search of common ground. In the meantime, lives and futures continue to be lost. None of this is easy to grasp in terms of our daily lives, but I would like to invite us to try to open ourselves up to embracing a shared vision just as Dr. King presented his vision so many years ago.

This morning while driving my husband to work, I opened a conversation with a casual remark that led to further discussion, and my husband chose to refute a statement that I made with newly acquired information that debunked my point of view. We exchanged thoughts and were immediately thrust into separate camps. Even with my clear understanding of what was happening, I got fully engaged in defending my position and experienced a breakdown in my capacity to yield to our obvious differences on the topic in favor of mutual co-existence. Consequently, when he departed he seemed more relaxed with the situation than I was and his parting remarks were an attempt to be disarming, while my response was silence as cold as the 16 degree temperature outdoors. In fact, I am writing this w; not as a ith the full knowledge that I failed miserably to pick things up and join him in a pleasant “good-bye.” Although this disclosure may be damaging to my hypothesis that we can *just get along*, it fully qualifies me to report that coming together is not easy stuff. This will serve as my point of departure for launching this tribute to Dr. King and the people of our Nation. Struggle will likely always be a part of how we ultimately come together. I struggled to be heard and

understood for my point of view in the face of a self-assured, oppositional challenge. The dissonance and discomfort in the aftermath of this exchange had me searching for a way to integrate the experience and arise from it with greater understanding and acceptance. Perhaps this is what happens in a country where free thinkers and diverse opinions abound. My caution and heartfelt hope is that we will not sacrifice life and limb; liberty and justice; peace and progress for the perceived advantage of feeling right at the expense of losing sight of what is really important. I throw myself on the altar of this endeavor and confess that I have successfully moved on to the higher ground of non-judgment and non-resistance to my husband’s expressed view. The result is that I happily have adopted a “live and let live” approach that allows me freedom from the dictates of my beliefs that leaves room for other perspectives. This approach also places emphasis on *living* and a life-sustaining appreciation for the ideals and beliefs that make peaceful co-existence possible.

Most of us have seen footage of the brutality and carnage associated with our Nation’s struggle with the acceptance of equality during the height of the civil right era. We have also seen and heard the reports of people clinging to life on respirators; and lives lost to the devastation of the COVID pandemic during the months prior to the development of vaccines. In both instances, these events can begin to seem abstract and somehow virtual and unreal. Hearing about hundreds of years of cruelty or hundreds of thousands of deaths can become more than we can fully comprehend. The result of our ongoing struggles may be that we start to blur the images

and quietly dismiss the rising numbers of fatalities as though the counting represents some inanimate objects. Not seeking reconciliation and making peace; or not fully regarding the loss of life as the central issue might leave us bereft of our basic humanity.

Yesterday, I had an experience that has stayed in my consciousness since it happened. I was walking from my car in a municipal parking lot when just ahead of me, I noticed something moving. At that distance, it appeared that it could have been a discarded bag or something else. The moving part seemed attached to another part that was still and fixed upon the ground. As I came closer, I could see that it was an injured pigeon who continued to momentarily lift its head as its body remained motionless. I wanted to help, but I could see that the pigeon was seriously hurt and there was little that I could do to intervene. Just then, its head stopped moving and at that moment, I was a witness as life left this small creature’s body. Instinctively, my hand went over my heart and I felt the sorrow from this tiny life that passed away. In an instance, life and death became very real. I mention this here as a reminder that all life is sacred and to feel is human. It reminded me of the need to recommit to honoring our living world and the dream of Dr. King who envisioned a future where we all could live together in harmony. Grappling with feelings and beliefs may be a crucial part of embracing such a vision, if it enables us to arrive at the understanding that we are in a life and death struggle to imagine a better world. Perhaps this is what makes us truly human; and like Dr. King, gives us the ability to sustain a vision of hope for the future.

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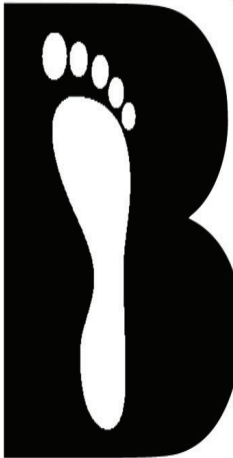
One year after a dedicated NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA) funding stream administered by each Borough President’s Office was eliminated in the Fiscal Year 2021 Expense Budget, Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr. today announced the restoration of the \$1.1 million Borough President’s Discretionary DFTA Fund. Nearly \$325,000 of this funding will be distributed by the Queens Borough President’s Office to support senior centers, homecare, meal services and more.

“Our elders disproportionately bore the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. From food and housing insecurity to isolation and the virus itself, which has proven to be deadliest for older individuals, the obstacles our seniors have faced these past two years are numerous,” said **Borough President RICHARDS**. “I’m proud to have fought tirelessly, and successfully, to get this critical funding stream restored this year and I look forward to working with our senior service providers to help improve the lives of the more than 300,000 elders who proudly call Queens home — each one of them deserving of the ability to age with grace and dignity.”

Passed just three months after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic devastation, the adopted Fiscal Year 2021 Expense Budget saw millions of dollars in cuts to DFTA, including the elimination of a \$1.1 million pool of discretionary funding shared amongst the five borough presidents’ offices and allocated to senior service organizations across their respective boroughs. The cut was vociferously opposed by all five borough presidents, including then-Acting Queens Borough President Sharon Lee.

Upon taking office, Borough President Richards took an active role in getting the funding restored through negotiating with the City Council, including with Queens Council Members such as then-Committee on Finance Chair Council Member Daniel Dromm and borough delegation leader Council Member Karen Koslowitz. On May 25, 2021, the Borough President testified before the City Council Committee on Finance, stating that many Queens seniors are “wholly dependent” on the services this funding supports.

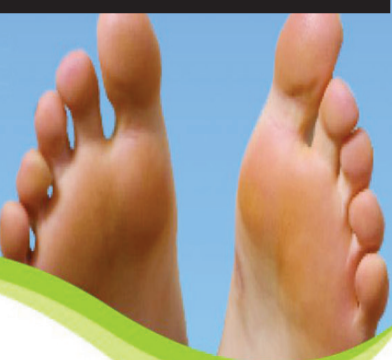
With the fund restored, the Queens Borough President’s Office has already begun partnering with senior service organizations to identify and allocate funding toward programs designed to uplift Queens’ elders.



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The **New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF)** is a new federally funded program to assist homeowners at risk of default, foreclosure or displacement as a result of a COVID-related financial hardship.

The program is now accepting applications.

Help is here! Homeowners, including those living in condos and co-ops, can now apply for essential financial relief. The NYS HAF offers a wide range of services for eligible homeowners such as financial support to address missed housing-related payments. To apply or learn more, visit nyhomeownerfund.org or call 1-844-77-NYHAF (776-9423).



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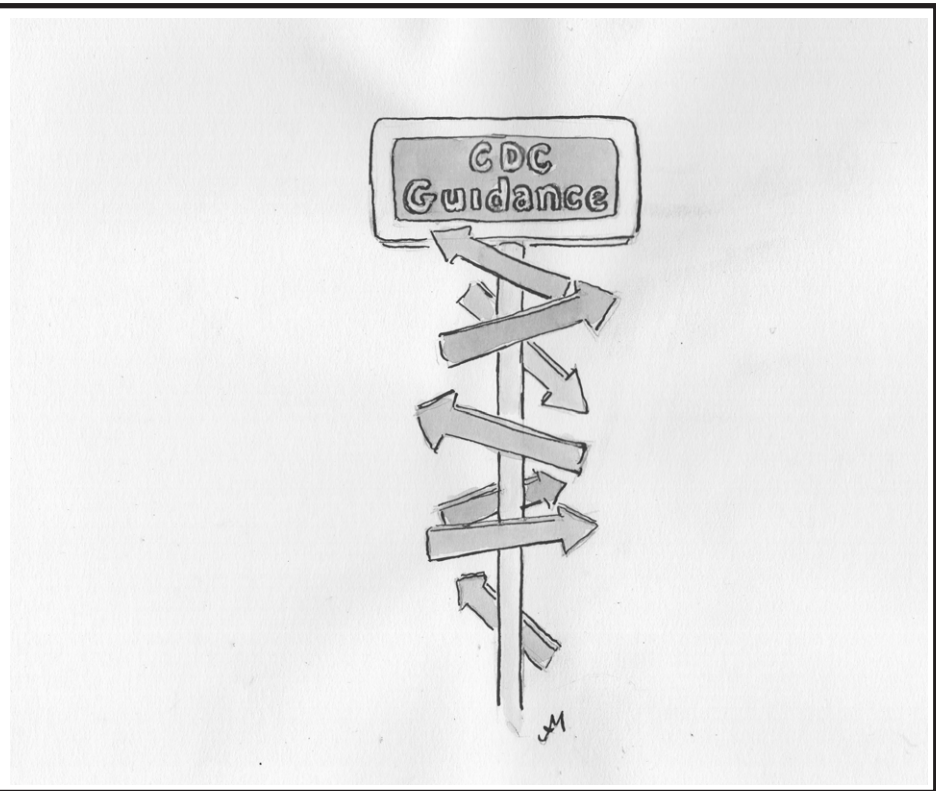


BY THE CRSE WORKING GROUP



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WINTER CLOTHING AND FOOD DRIVE

As winter brings in sub-freezing temperatures to the area, State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. is partnering with P.S. 229 in Woodside for a Winter Coat and Food Drive to benefit families in the community.

From now until Monday, January 31, Addabbo’s offices will be collecting gently used winter coats, gloves, scarfs, and boots, as well as any non-perishable food items. On January 31, all the items donated will be brought to P.S. 229 in Woodside to be distributed to local families in need.

“I am happy to open my offices up to be dropoff locations for this great community event,” Addabbo said. “Helping families stay warm during the frigid winter months is something we can all get behind. And we always hear from our local food pantries that they get plenty of food during the holiday season, but the rest of the year it can be more difficult to bring in donations. I want to thank the generous members of the community for their continued support in helping local families in need.”

Addabbo’s Howard Beach office is located at 159-53 102nd Street, and his Middle Village office is located at 66-85 73rd Place. The hours of operation for both offices are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you have any questions about this drive, contact Addabbo’s office at 718-738-1111.

SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS ARE CHANGING

by Andrew Campanella

If you’re reading this, chances are you’re a parent, or have friends or neighbors who are. Baby Boomer, Gen X, or Millennial—the K-12 school scene has changed so much since we were kids. Understanding these changes can help moms and dads guide their children to greater learning, success, and happiness. So: here are the three biggest changes affecting education in Sunnyside and across the U.S. today, and what these changes mean for your family.

First, school choice opportunities have broadened over the last generation. That means parents have more options for where to send their children to school. For example: traditional public schools have adopted more flexible enrollment policies. Charter school laws have passed in 45 states, including New York. More families are aware they can choose public magnet programs, where kids receive education with a special focus, like STEM or the arts. Today, some New York students are able to receive private scholarships to help fund their tuition at independent schools. Plus, a growing number of New York families are choosing homeschooling.

A second game-changer since when we were kids is that there’s now more community support for making school choices. There are also more resources for parents to help them find schools and learning environments that meet their children’s needs. I’ve worked in K-12 education for more than 15 years; over that time, I’ve seen dozens of parent-focused organizations spring up to shine a spotlight on learning options in local communities. From helping parents find scholarships to private schools, to helping them figure out the process of transferring to public school outside of their zone, to offering bilingual application assistance, grassroots organizations are cutting the stress out of school searching.

You can visit schoolchoiceweek.com/new-york to find community organizations in New York. Keep in mind that parents cite word-of-mouth as a key factor in what school they choose. This means you have the power to help others in Sunnyside by sharing your own school experiences.

Third, a plethora of *online* learning environments have developed since our school days. These online schooling options are more comprehensive and focused than the emergency remote learning that many families experienced during the pandemic. In New York, there are paid full-time online learning options. Besides official online schooling, resources like schoolhouse.world offer free support to supplement in-person learning.

All of these changes to K-12 education are reasons for hope. With more options, Sunnyside parents have more opportunities to find a free or inexpensive education personalized to their unique children.

If you are considering a new or different environment for your daughter or son for the next school year, though, the time to start evaluating your options is now. Don’t wait! Begin the school search process during National School Choice Week (January 23-29, 2022), when 1,339 schools and homeschool groups in New York will be working together to raise awareness of opportunity in K-12 education. You won’t regret it, and your children will thank you.

AUDITIONS FOR THE ORATORIO SOCIETY

Sing with OSQ! Become a part of the musical history of Queens as OSQ celebrates it’s 95th anniversary, singing from the heart since 1927. Join the Oratorio Society of Queens under the direction of Maestro David Close and embark on a musical journey singing classical masterpieces to American classics. OSQ is a community-based chorus, which includes diverse members of varied backgrounds with differing levels of singing ability. Singing with OSQ is an excellent opportunity to create beautiful music with others and meet a wide range of people. The OSQ 2022 Spring season rehearsals will be conducted in-person. Rehearsals take place every Monday at Temple Beth Sholom, 172nd Street and Northern Boulevard, Flushing, from 7:30 pm to 9 pm beginning on January 10, 2022.

Auditions will take place on January 10 and 17, 2022, at Temple Beth Sholom prior to rehearsal. Please call 718.279.3006 to make an appointment.

For additional information on membership and the audition process call 718.279.3006 or visit <https://www.queensoratorio.org/becoming-a-member>

NEW LAWS IN EFFECT FOR 2022

As we ring in the new year, 2022 brings with it several new laws that will go into effect that will impact everyone across the state, and Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. wants to inform his constituents of these changes.

“Each year new laws go into effect that were voted upon by the state legislature and approved by the Governor. Some begin at the start of the new year, while other laws begin later in the year,” Addabbo explained. “I want to make sure that everyone is aware of the new laws that will start this year that can have an impact on people’s everyday lives from how you take home food from a restaurant, to helping to stop spam robocalls, to how you can gamble in the state, and how we vote.”

-In 2022, two new laws are aimed at making it more difficult for scammers to make automated robocalls to New Yorkers. One of the laws requires telecommunications companies in New York State to proactively block calls that are likely illegitimate. That would include calls from “spoofed” phone numbers that cannot or do not make outgoing calls. A second bill targeting robocalls requires phone providers to use a new type of call authentication system, using cryptography to validate that a call is really coming from the number shown on caller ID displays.

-A bill signed into law on December 23, 2021 will establish a new 988 emergency phone line in New York State to be used alongside 911 as a suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system. Users will be able to call or text 988 when experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. Operators will work in tandem with 911 call centers to respond. Federal guidelines already required 988 lines to be in place by July 16, 2022. The New York law will put in place extra training and reporting measures to help those in distress or feeling suicidal.

-Beginning January 1, 2022, restaurants will no longer be able to use polystyrene containers for take-out or give them to customers so they can take home their leftovers. The law was adopted in 2020 and despite supply shortages, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has set up a system where people can make complaints about businesses not complying with the law. The first violation will cost businesses up to \$250. A second will cost businesses up to \$500 and/or a third violation up to \$1,000. According to the DEC, fines collected will be put into the Environmental Protection Fund. Additionally, the law also bans foam packing peanuts from being used by manufacturers or retailers in the state. Among those who will be affected by the foam packaging ban are caterers, food carts, food trucks, retail food stores, delis, grocery stores, cafeterias, coffee shops, hospitals, adult care facilities, nursing homes, schools and colleges. The state will provide waivers to nonprofits and government agencies — including food pantries — that provide food and meals to the poor.

-This year is also bringing changes to the NYS Paid Family Leave program. New Yorkers who have met the time-worked requirements for the state’s paid family leave can take up to 12 weeks off to care for a new child or sick family member. In 2022, New Yorkers using paid family leave will get 67% of their average weekly wage or up to \$1,068.36 a week. New legislation, introduced by Senator Addabbo and signed by Governor Kathy Hochul in November, adds caring for a sick sibling to be recognized under the family leave act. The extension applies to biological, adopted, half-siblings, or step-siblings but won’t take effect until 2023.

-Based on legislation drafted and introduced by Senator Addabbo, nine mobile sports books are on track to be launched in 2022: BetMGM, Caesars Sportsbook, DraftKings Sportsbook, FanDuel Sportsbook, BetRivers, PointsBet, Resorts World, Bally Bet and WynnBET. Experts says these mobile betting apps will be up and running in the middle of January, in time to take bets for the Super Bowl and will provide the state with significant revenue, increased educational funding, jobs and new funding for gaming addiction and youth sports programs.

-To further protect whistleblowers from retaliation from employers, the definition of an employee now includes former employees. The term “retaliation” was also expanded to include actions or threats that would impact a former employee’s employment, current or future. It also includes threats to or contacting immigration. The statute of limitations was also extended to two years. This law will take effect on January 26, 2022.

-According to a new law starting in May 2022, employees must be notified before they are hired if an employer will be electronically monitoring them in any way. Employers will also have to post the notice and give employees an annual notice.

-A new law will criminalize the sale of anonymous “ghost guns,” a term used to describe guns that don’t have serial numbers and are put together in pieces. This lack of identifying information makes it difficult for law enforcement to trace these ghost guns when they are used to commit crimes. Advocates for the New York ghost gun ban said the firearms often end up in the hands of buyers with criminal records or those who would not pass a required federal background check. This new law also requires gunsmiths to register and include serial numbers on any firearm that they assemble.

-In 2022 New York will begin installing speed cameras along highway work zones under a pilot program that will issue automatic speeding tickets to violators. The cameras will take photos of license plates on vehicles exceeding the speed limit in work zones. Tickets will then be mailed to the vehicle owner. A first offense carries a fine of \$50, a second ticket within 18 months is \$75, and three or more tickets will result in fines of \$100. The state will gather data on how much money the cameras save on labor costs compared to using police for speeding enforcement.

-Two bills signed into law by Governor Hochul will increase the number of early voting sites in New York and require faster counting of absentee ballots cast in an election. The Make Voting Easy Act requires each county to designate at least one early voting polling site for every 40,000 registered voters. In counties with fewer than 500,000 registered voters, one early voting site would have to be established for every 30,000 registered voters. The law also increases the number of hours polling sites must be open on weekends and holidays for early voting. The polling sites previously had to be open for at least five hours on those days, while the new law requires the polls to be open for at least eight hours.

-A second voting reform law requires most absentee ballots to be counted in time for unofficial results to be made public on election night.

-A separate law will require the state to establish an online system for voters to track the status of any absentee ballot they submit in an election. The status of the ballot, or any application for a ballot, must be made available on the website of the state or local Board of Elections. The lack of a statewide tracking system became an issue in the 2020 election when a record number of New Yorkers chose to submit absentee ballots during the coronavirus pandemic.

-Another new law will make it a crime to use a fake Covid-19 vaccination card. Violators can be charged with a misdemeanor under the state’s forgery laws. The new law also makes it a felony for anyone to intentionally enter, alter or destroy electronic computer records of Covid-19 vaccinations. It was already against federal law to use a fake Covid-19 vaccination card.

-Private sector businesses in New York will have to offer their employees retirement savings plans starting in 2022. Business owners that don’t already provide their employees with a retirement plan will be required to enroll workers in the state’s Secure Choice Savings Plan. The plan automatically makes payroll deductions into an individual retirement account, or IRA. Employees will be able to opt out of the program at any time.

-A new law will require homeless shelters to provide women with free feminine hygiene products such as sanitary napkins, tampons and panty liners.

-Insurance companies will be prohibited under a new law from using the breed of a family dog to determine the cost of homeowner’s insurance. New York becomes the second state, after Nevada, to enact such a law. Advocates for the law said insurance companies have denied or canceled homeowner insurance for households with certain breeds of dogs. Among the targeted breeds were pit bulls and Rottweilers. A second law relating to pets will require veterinarians to report suspected animal cruelty to authorities.

-By the end of 2021, municipalities had to decide whether they were going to allow recreational marijuana to be sold. Opting out of allowing marijuana to be sold also means those municipalities are also opting out of tax revenue. The Rockefeller Institute of Government created the Marijuana Opt-Out Tracker to monitor municipalities’ decisions.

“There are some big changes for the state that we hope will have a positive impact on our residents, businesses, and the environment,” Addabbo said. “If anyone has any questions about these bills and what they would mean for you, please give my office a call and we can explain these new laws. We look forward to making 2022 a big year for New York State!”

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