



This Week in New York

Covering New York State and City Government

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In the News – State



State DOH Looks to Bolster Medical Marijuana Program

With the Possibility of Recreational Marijuana Legalization, DOH Looks to Increase Patient Access to Medical Marijuana & Study Health Insurance Coverage

The New York State Department of Health this week issued the second two-year report on the Medical Use of Marijuana Under the Compassionate Care Act, recommending changes to increase patient access as the State mulls legalizing recreational marijuana adult-use.

In putting forth its recommendations, DOH emphasized the need to expand the medical marijuana program “to reach patients who may be self- medicating with marijuana from sources that are not regulated or held to the same high-quality standards as the medical marijuana products manufactured by registered organizations.” These recommendations include:

- Allowing practitioners, based on clinical evaluation and their discretion, to certify patients who previously did not qualify for medical marijuana.
- Permitting all practitioners who can prescribe controlled substances to people to become registered providers.
- Initiating a pilot study to assess the cost-benefits of health insurance coverage for medical marijuana.
- Promoting research studies of approved medical marijuana products.
- Allowing registered organizations to use third-party contractors for security.

According to Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, New York's Medical Marijuana Program has almost 81,000 certified patients and more than 2,000 registered practitioners. The most common severe debilitating or life-threatening condition is chronic pain (53.13%). The most common clinically associated or complicating condition is severe or chronic pain (72.93%). Patients aged 51-60 years made up the greatest percentage of certifications (23.06%), followed by patients aged 61-70 (19.21%).

Also this week, Compassionate Care sponsor State Senator Diane Savino traveled to Nevada – which legalized marijuana use and maintained its medical marijuana program - to meet with state officials, tour facilities, and bring back its best practices.

“I am very concerned about what bringing adult use will do to the medical program. We now have 31 states that have medical marijuana and nine of them have implemented adult use. Not all of them have done it in a successful way, up-ending the medical program or creating a whole new set of problems,” Senator Savino said in a *Staten Island Advance* article. “So I wanted to take a look at Nevada, which by everyone’s estimation has done this in the most successful, cohesive way.”



Senator Savino tours Nevada’s DB Labs

According to Senator Savino, some states (Oregon, Washington and Colorado) saw a drop in medical marijuana product sales and dispensaries after adult-use legalization. Nevada, however, introduced a single-stream model, which allows for recreational and medical marijuana to be distributed in the same location.

Senator Savino is also looking for ways to reduce the barriers of entry into New York’s marijuana industry, including opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses. She cited the State’s current vertical integration model that requires a company to do “everything from seed to sale” and the significant financing required as barriers to the market.

“Just that high barrier of entry creates a lack of diversity in this industry,” Senator Savino explained in the *Advance* report. “What we’re looking at going forward is how do we allow people into the market place at various points of entry.”

Currently, medical marijuana can be used as a treatment for the following conditions: cancer, HIV infection or AIDS, Lou Gehrig’s disease (ALS), Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, epilepsy, inflammatory bowel disease, neuropathy, Huntington’s disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and chronic pain.

In the News – City



Armed with IBO Report, Council Calls for the Phase-Out of the Commercial Tax Relief Programs

New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson called for the phase-out of the City’s Commercial Revitalization Program (CRP) and Commercial Expansions Program (CEP), following an Independent Budget Office (IBO) report that questioned the effectiveness and relevance of the tax expenditure programs.

According to the Speaker, IBO's "Worth the Cost? An Examination of the Commercial Revitalization & Commercial Expansion Programs" did not find any effect on vacancy or unemployment rates attributable to the programs. The two programs cost the City \$27 million in tax expenditures in 2017.

"Worth the Cost?" is the first result of Local Law 18 of 2017. This law created a process whereby the IBO conducts independent reviews of the City's economic development tax breaks in cooperation with the City Council.

As a result of the IBO's findings, Speaker Johnson and Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm propose phasing out the Commercial Revitalization Program and Commercial Expansion Program since they are "not achieving their purposes and not a good use of taxpayer money." These programs were intended to increase employment rates in Lower Manhattan – and in areas outside of core Manhattan – decrease vacancy rates, and encourage property renovations.

"Businesses lay the foundation of our City, and the Council will always support commercial tenants who provide jobs and revenue to New Yorkers," said Speaker Johnson. "However, it is important that tax incentives are relevant to today's economy and meet their goals. If not we should modify or sunset those tax breaks. I thank the Independent Budget Office for their report and efforts, and I thank Finance Committee Chair Daniel Dromm for his partnership."



The Speaker cited the following IBO findings:

- Both before and after the Commercial Revitalization Program started, commercial vacancy rates and employment in Lower Manhattan followed similar trends as the rest of the city. According to the Council, IBO's analysis suggests that the program did not decrease vacancy rates and had little, if any, effect on employment.
- Over 60 percent of participants in the Commercial Revitalization Program spent more on upgrades to their office or commercial space than they received in tax abatements. According to the Council, this suggests that many of these participants would have spent at least their required \$5 per square foot absent the program. This is less pronounced among Commercial Expansion Program participants, about 40 percent of whom spent close to their required \$2.50 per square foot on upgrades for firms with fewer than 125 employees.

The Commercial Revitalization Program (CRP) provides a property tax abatement and a commercial rent tax reduction to certain commercial properties south of Canal Street in Manhattan. The Commercial Expansions Program (CEP) provides the same property tax abatement to eligible properties north of 96th Street in Manhattan. The abatements are given for new, renewed or expanded commercial leases. Leases must be for at least 3 years for small firms and at least 10 years for larger firms (over 125 employees). There are minimum required investments in building improvements to go with the leases.

Locations where leases were subsidized with the tax breaks since 2010 include:

Commercial Revitalization Program (CRP):

1 New York Plaza New York
 125 Broad Street New York
 195 Broadway New York
 One Water Street New York
 1 Liberty Plaza New York
 222 Broadway New York
 28 Liberty Street New York
 100 William Street New York
 120 Wall Street New York
 165 Broadway New York
 One New York Plaza New York
 30 Broad Street New York
 One Liberty Plaza New York
 233 Broadway New York
 120 Broadway New York

Commercial Expansions Program (CEP):

30-30 47th Avenue Long Island City
 131-11 Atlantic Avenue Richmond Hill
 125 Lake Avenue Staten Island
 60-01 31st Avenue Woodside
 5700 Avenue D New York
 32-00 Skillman Avenue Long Island City
 63-15 Traffic Avenue Ridgewood
 300 Liberty Avenue Brooklyn
 45-13 33rd Street Long Island City
 3611 14th Avenue Brooklyn
 110 Beard Street Brooklyn
 170-01 Douglas Avenue Jamaica

Bills Approved by the City Council

Introduction 304-A, sponsored by Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, would establish a taxi medallion task force. The task force would review the changes in sales prices of medallions, potential future sales prices, and the impact on the City’s budget. Following the review, the task force would recommend relevant changes in laws, rules, regulations, and policies.

Introduction 376-B, sponsored by Council Member Ritchie Torres, would require the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to conduct outreach informing as many youth as practicable about the availability of bullying awareness and prevention resources, including those that provide counseling, mental health resources, mobile texting or internet chat functionality and referrals.

Introduction 391-A, sponsored by Council Member Eric Ulrich, would require the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) to provide benefits counseling services to veterans seeking assistance with federal, state, and city benefits that they may be entitled to based on their military service. DVS would be required to provide such counseling services through trained staff and in at least one location per borough, including at each veterans resource center.

Introduction 394-A, sponsored by Council Member Eric Ulrich, would require DVS to create official veterans resource centers in each borough, no later than June 1, 2019. The resource centers would be responsible for providing veterans with free information about, at a minimum, housing, social services, financial assistance, discharge upgrade resources, and veterans benefits.

Introduction 396-A, sponsored by Council Member Eric Ulrich, would require DVS to create a veterans resource guide, to be updated regularly, that will be available on its website and in physical form.

Introduction 1062-A, sponsored by Council Member Barry Grodenchik, would require drivers for high-volume for-hire services to be paid for trips even when the payment transaction fails, for example because the payment provider does not complete the transaction. In such circumstances, the high-volume for-hire service would have to pay the driver.

Introduction 1068-A, sponsored by Council Member Stephen Levin, would require the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) and the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to engage in financial outreach and education to taxi and for-hire vehicle drivers. For taxi drivers, the outreach and education would relate to the purchase, lease, financing, or refinancing of taxi medallions. For for-hire vehicle drivers, the outreach and education would relate to the purchase, rental, lease, or loan agreements for vehicles to be used as for-hire vehicles.

Introduction 1079-A, sponsored by Council Member Donovan Richards, would create an Office of Inclusion within the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

Introduction 1081-A, sponsored by Council Member Rafael Salamanca, would require the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), in consultation with other agencies, to provide assistance to drivers, including mental health counseling, financial counseling, and referrals to outside organizations for additional assistance.

Introduction 1096-A, sponsored by Council Member Ruben Diaz, Sr., would require high-volume for-hire services, as part of their new licensing requirement, to affirm that they will not administer any automatic deductions for vehicle payments from driver pay unless the deduction is optional and chosen by the driver

Introduction 1137-A, sponsored by Council Member Adrienne Adams, would codify into the Charter the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics (MODA). The office uses analytics tools to prioritize risk more strategically, deliver services more efficiently, enforce laws more effectively and increase transparency.

Briefs

Amazon Selects Long Island City for New Corporate Headquarters

Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio this week announced that Amazon will establish a new corporate headquarters in Long Island City, Queens. The decision followed a year-long selection process during which 238 cities across North America competed for the multibillion-dollar project.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Amazon and the State, in 2019, Amazon will occupy up to 500,000 square feet at One Court Square while working to construct four million square feet of commercial space on Long Island City's waterfront over the next 10 years. It includes expansion opportunities for up to 8 million square feet over the next 15 years.

Amazon anticipates to fill at least 25,000 new jobs by 2029 and up to 40,000 jobs by 2034 with an average salary of more than \$150,000. The construction is expected to create an average of 1300 direct construction jobs annually through 2033. Overall, the project is estimated to create more than 107,000 total direct and indirect jobs, over \$14 billion in new tax revenue for the State and a net of \$13.5 billion in City tax revenue over the next 25 years.

State and City subsidies are estimated at \$3 billion.

The deal has been criticized by elected officials from New York City to Buffalo, with Democrats and Republicans alike questioning the subsidies to the corporate giant, as well as the lack of local input in the project. The deal was developed without the need for City legislative or regulatory approval. The need for State regulatory approval is still being determined.

Governor Signs Legislation to Increase Rates of Compensation for Gold Star Parents

Governor Andrew Cuomo this week signed legislation to provide an annual increase in the compensation rate for Gold Star Parents who have lost a child in the armed services during a time of war. Under current law, Gold Star Parents are paid \$500 annually with no provision for an annual increase. This new law allows for an annual increase at a rate equal to the percentage increase of benefits set by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Gold Star annuity is a special income-eligible annuity to recognize the emotional loss and financial implications of parents whose child has died serving this country.

State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Seeks New Commissioner

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance has begun a search for a Commissioner. According to published reports, the agency posted a job listing on LinkedIn with a detailed list of responsibilities, such as providing oversight and assistance to social services districts and providers, supervising homeless housing and services programs, and providing assistance to certain immigrant populations.

Former State Assemblyman Samuel Roberts has served as Commissioner since June 2015. No formal announcement has been made regarding his tenure.

NYS 2018-19 Alpine & Nordic Season Open

New York's 2018-19 Alpine and Nordic ski seasons begin this week with Belleayre Mountain Ski Resort, Gore Mountain, and Whiteface Mountain are all slated to open Saturday, November 17th. Gore's Nordic Center and Lake Placid's Mt. Van Hoevenberg will also open Saturday.

All three resorts, operated by the Olympic Regional Development Authority, began their snowmaking operations last weekend and have been making snow around the clock preparing for Saturday's opening.


New York City Transit Options

Fare Type	Market Share	Current	Option 1	Option 2
Base MetroCard / Faresnail	5%	\$2.75	\$2.75 (0%)	\$3.00 (9.1%)
Cash on fare	2%	\$2.75	\$2.75 (0%)	\$3.00 (9.1%)
Single Ride Ticket	1%	\$3.00	\$3.00 (0%)	\$3.25 (8.3%)
Bonus MetroCard	-41%	5% bonus with \$5.50 purchase	Eliminate bonus	10% bonus with \$6.00 purchase
Effective Fare		\$2.62	\$2.75 (5.0%)	\$2.73 (4.2%)
30 Day Pass	30%	\$121	\$127.00 (5.0%)	\$126.25 (4.3%)
7 Day Pass	22%	\$32	\$33.00 (3.1%)	
Express Bus			No longer accepted	
Coin	+0.1%	\$6.50		
Base Fare	NA	\$6.50	\$7.00 (7.7%)	\$7.25 (11.5%)
MetroCard Fare	0.4%	\$6.19	\$7.00 (13.1%)	\$6.99 (6.5%)
7-Day Express Bus Plus	0.1%	\$59.50	\$63.00 (5.9%)	

Option 1

- Keep base fare at \$2.75
- Eliminate bonus
- 5.0% effective increase

Option 2

- Increase base fare to \$3.00
- Increase bonus to 10%
 - Buy 10 get one free
- 4.2% effective increase

Both options

- No coin on Express Bus
- Increase 7 Day less than 30 Day

MTA Mulls Fare Increase in March

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Executive Board is considering two options for fare increases of about 4 percent in March. The first would keep the base fare at \$2.75, but end the bonus for buying a pay-per-ride MetroCard. The second would increase the base fare to \$3 and double the bonus to 10 percent. Also, tolls on MTA bridges and tunnels could increase by 8 percent for E-ZPass users. The board will vote on the rate increase in January.

Source: NY Times

Attorney General Elect Names Transition Team

Attorney General-Elect Leticia James this week announced the co-chairs of her transition team: Former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch; former state Attorney General Robert Abrams, former state Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, Syracuse University Law School Dean Craig Boise, and former U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay Julissa Reynoso.

SUNY Trustees Approve Tuition Increases at Community Colleges

The State University's Board of Trustees approved tuition hikes at its 30 community colleges. The Board approved an average rate increase of about \$156 per year, from \$4,522 to \$4,678, or 3.5 percent. The increases were previously approved by the respective college boards and resident counties.

Coming Up

New York State

Monday November 19th

Allowing adult use of marijuana

Joint Assembly Standing Committee on Codes, Committee on Health, Committee on Governmental Operations, and Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Common Council Chambers, Buffalo City Hall, 13th Floor, 65 Niagara Square, Buffalo, 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday November 20th

Allowing adult use of marijuana

Joint Assembly Standing Committee on Codes, Committee on Health, Committee on Governmental Operations, and Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, City Council Chambers, Binghamton City Hall, 38 Hawley Street, Binghamton, 10:30 a.m.

New York City

Monday November 19th

Committee on Aging, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Mental Health and Addiction, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Civil and Human Rights, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 10 a.m.

Committee on For-Hire Vehicles, Committee Room – City Halls, 10 a.m.

Committee on Health, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Hospitals, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 1 p.m.

Committee on Public Safety, Council Chambers – City Hall, 2 p.m.

Tuesday November 20th

Committee on Governmental Operations, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

Committee on Finance, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 16th Floor, 10 a.m.

Committee on Land Use, Committee Room – City Hall, 11 a.m.

Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 1 p.m.

Wednesday November 21st

Committee on Women, Committee Room – 250 Broadway, 14th Floor, 10 a.m.

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120 Broadway, 28th Floor
New York, New York 10271
Telephone (212) 652-3890
Facsimile (212) 652-3891

111 Washington Avenue, St. 401
Albany, New York 12210
Telephone (518) 449-3320
Facsimile (518) 449-5812

25 Hyatt Street, St. 202
Staten Island, New York 10301
Telephone (718) 943-1050
Facsimile (718) 943-1051