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## The Legislature Returns from Break

Despite the lack of accumulating white stuff over the past several weeks, the calendar indicates we are still in the throes of Winter, and Albany is bracing for what is likely the first of two winter storms this week. Pre-COVID that would mean cancellations on the busiest lobby day of the week (Tuesday), but because the pandemic has led to proficiencies in virtual meetings and presentations most of those meetings will likely shift to virtual platforms.

The legislature returned to town this week after the February break and session will get back into full swing with focus continuing to be primarily on budget proposals and advocacy.

At this point, conversations are still pointing to the two houses of the legislature introducing their respective proposals in mid-March in order to meet the April 1 enactment requirement. That being said, we continue to await any 30-day amendments from the Governor and legislative budget hearings are still being conducted.

As budget making by the legislature continues, Governor Hochul has been touring the state making regional announcements highlighting specific components of her Executive Budget proposal. She made an appearance in Buffalo today with video of the event [found here](#). Last week she highlighted her plans for investment in the [Southern Tier](#), as well as highlights of her plans for the Mid-Hudson Region [found here](#).

### Budget Hearings:

Budget Hearings conclude this week with Higher Education scheduled today; Health scheduled to take place tomorrow; wrapping up with Housing and Workforce Development / Labor on Wednesday. Testimony and archived hearings can be accessed [here](#).



## Legislative News

### Legislative Activity

The Legislature is in session the 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> this week and will return to session the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of next week. The legislature has already introduced approximately 10,122 bills. The Senate and Assembly did not pass any bills last week as they were not in session.

### Public Hearings

- ~ **On March 1<sup>st</sup>**, the Senate Standing Committee on Investigations and Government Operations as well as the Assembly Standing Committee on Governmental Operations will host a public hearing on authorizing video conferencing by the Legislature.
- ~ **On March 2<sup>nd</sup>**, the Assembly Standing Committee on Aging will host a public hearing on the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.
- ~ **On March 3<sup>rd</sup>**, the Senate Standing Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions and the Assembly Standing Committee on Transportations will hold a public hearing "to receive an update on the MTA budget forecast, post-pandemic analysis of ridership and safety concerns, and the Penn Station Revitalization Plan."
- ~ **On March 7<sup>th</sup>**, the Senate Standing Committees on Health and Mental Health will host a public hearing to "receive testimony on how to identify and examine best practices for integrating doulas into New York's maternal healthcare system, as well as recommendations for policies that provide sustainable Medicaid reimbursement rates for doulas."

## From the Governor

### **OPWDD Partners with SUNY to Expand Existing Direct Support Workforce**

Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities has entered into a \$5 million agreement with the State University of New York to expand a program that will enable direct support professionals to secure national certification and college credit toward a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree. Supported through \$5 million in federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, the micro-credential program is aimed at helping individuals already working in the profession and those new to the developmental disabilities field in earning college credits that meet requirements for certification from the [National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals](#) (NADSP).

### **Executive Orders:**

Executive Order 4, continuing most healthcare staffing shortage provisions, was extended through 3/23/23 via [Executive Order 4.18](#).

## State Agencies

### ***From the New York Office of the Attorney General***

#### **AG Protects Homecare Patients and Caregivers**

Attorney General Letitia James announced that actions by her office [stopped a home care company, Affordable Senior Care of New York LLC \(Affordable\), from preventing patients and their caregivers from choosing the provider of their choice](#). An investigation by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) found that Laszlo Friedman, acting on behalf of Affordable, entered into an unlawful no-poach agreement with a competitor, Marks Homecare Agency, to not take each other's existing patients. The OAG found that on several occasions, patients were unable to switch to a provider that could have paid their caregivers more. As a result of an agreement with the OAG, Affordable and Mr. Friedman cannot enter into any anti-competitive agreements in the future, must pay the state \$400,000, and will cooperate with OAG's ongoing investigations in the home care industry. Attorney General James previously [announced a \\$550,000 settlement with Marks Homecare](#) and its executive for its illegal no-poach agreement with Affordable.

### ***From the New York Office of the Comptroller***

#### **NYC's Fiscal Picture Improves Short Term, but Significant Risks Lie Ahead**

New York City's \$104.8 billion preliminary fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget has benefitted from better-than-projected revenue collections, the reallocation of unused federal pandemic relief funds and savings initiatives, according to [report released](#) by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli. DiNapoli's office assumes that a number of the fiscal risks the city currently faces will continue, increasing the planned budget gap to about \$8.9 billion in FY 2025 and \$13.9 billion in FY 2027 (18% of city-fund revenues), even when adjusting for stronger revenue collections.

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