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# THE BROADWAY DEMOCRATS

◆ District Leaders: Curtis Arluck, Paula Diamond Román ◆ President: Mary Peppito ◆

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## **Annual Town Hall: “Around 125th Street”**

*Invited:*

Congressman Adriano Espaillat  
State Senator Cordell Cleare (30th District)  
Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine  
Councilmember Shaun Abreu (7th District)

NYPD (26th Precinct)  
Sanitation Department  
Community Board 9

### **Thursday, June 20**

**6:45pm - Sign-in/Refreshments**

**7:00pm - Town Hall**

Speakers will make brief presentations,  
followed by an in-depth question and answer session.

**Manhattan Pentecostal Church**  
**541 West 125th Street**  
**(Between Amsterdam and Old Broadway)**

for more information: [bwaydemsdistrictleaders@gmail.com](mailto:bwaydemsdistrictleaders@gmail.com)

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Volume 49, Issue 5

June 2024

## District Leader's Report

Curtis Arluck

### Governor Hochul's Congestion Pricing Disaster

Governor Hochul's last-minute decision to "pause" congestion pricing was one of the very worst decisions any New York Governor has ever made, one done in secrecy, at the eleventh hour, against and/or ignoring the advice of her New York City advisors such as Kathryn Garcia and Janno Lieber, at the behest of know-nothings who shout the loudest and generally vote Republican anyway.

The bankruptcy of her actions is shown by her proposal to make up the \$1 billion shortfall that congestion pricing was going to raise for desperately needed—and already promised—NYC transportation projects: instead raise the metropolitan transportation tax. This tax is paid by every NYC area business. The congestion pricing toll is paid only by the 2% of the population that drives into Manhattan below 59th Street. Virtually no one, including those who generally call for higher taxes, supported this idiotic proposal.

Experts, supported only a week before by the Governor, had worked for years to get the proposal right. Congestion pricing has been running well in London and Stockholm for years. Millions have already been spent—now wasted—to implement it here.

When she was in trouble in the last days of the 2022 campaign, Governor Hochul came to New York City, specifically to Barnard College, to ask us to bail her out. We did: Manhattan provided her entire margin of victory. Now she's turned her back on us, on our city, on the environment, and on common sense. It's time to look for someone new in 2026.

**Reminder to vote (and if you can, volunteer) for Micah Lasher and our entire Group 2 Judicial Convention Delegate slate! Early voting runs from June 15 to June 23. Election Day is June 25th. See you on the campaign trail and at the polls!**

## President's Corner

Mary Peppito

### The New York State Prison System should not be a Nursing Home

*Editor's note: this article was written before the close of the 2024 Legislative Session on June 6. The bill discussed was voted out of committee but was not acted upon by the full legislature.*

The Elder Parole Act was written by State Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, who said that it's intended to stop prisons from being nursing homes for seniors.

Elder parole legislation has been languishing in the legislature for the past several years. The Elder Parole Act would make anyone over the age of 55 who served 15 years in prison eligible for a parole hearing. It does not guarantee release, it just allows for a hearing.

According to Vera.org, there are "reams of research" that people age out of crime; in one study, less than one percent of people 65+ released on parole from NYS prisons in 2018 returned to prison for a new conviction in the three years following their release. <https://www.vera.org/news/no-one-should-be-sentenced-to-die-in-prison>.

In a recent New York Times op-ed, Barbara Hansen Treen, a former commissioner of parole, advocating for The Elder Parole Act noted that, even though, "from 2008 to 2021, the overall prison population [declined by half](#), yet the population age 50 or older increased, with ballooning health care costs crowding out other budget priorities. The state spends \$100,000 to \$240,000 on incarcerated people who are 55 or older, according to one of [the reform measures](#) before the State Legislature; for others, the figure is [about \\$60,000](#)" Moreover, she noted that in the prison system, old age begins at 50 and the average age of death by natural causes is 60.6 years. <https://tinyurl.com/NYT-Parole-Reform>.

"If we really believed in true economic justice, we would not waste all this money imprisoning folks until their last years of life. They should not finish their lives in a prison cell." Assemblyman Tony Simone, a Democrat from Manhattan.

Jeffrey Deskovic, the victim of a wrongful conviction who served 16 years in prison before being exonerated has seen the injustices first hand. “So if you’re 65 years old, and you’ve been in prison for 25 years, [but] you’re in terrible medical condition, and you still have eight years on your sentence, you’re going to stay in prison for those additional eight years before you have a parole board hearing,” under current state law, Deskovic said. <https://www.parolejusticenyc.com/campaign-platform>

Under the current parole laws according to the former Parole Commissioner Treen, “For older people in prison, ‘life’ becomes just another word for a slow death sentence.”

It makes sense to enact the Elder Parole Act and stop turning our prisons into nursing homes.



## On Campaigning and Kids

Micha Lasher

*Editor’s note: Micah Lasher is the Broadway Democrats’ endorsed candidate for Assembly for the 69th District.*

These last few months of campaigning for Assembly have been an exhausting, joyous sprint. Exhausting for obvious reasons, and joyous for many—not least of all, it’s been a ton of fun hitting the trail with the Broadway Dems! Whether we’re at Westside Market, or a dog run in the early morning in Riverside Park, or over at the Morningside Farmers’ Market, I’ve had a great time working together with friends in the club—longstanding and new—on an old-fashioned, neighborhood campaign.

Some of the most fun has been those times when my kids—Nate (13), Ben (12), and Phoebe (8)—have joined us out there. And they have done so without coercion or bribery! (Okay, perhaps they’ve made a calculated bet that ice cream might be offered at the end of the day.) Seeing them out there, learning about activism in this very concrete way, makes me think about how fortunate I was to be raised in this community, and how blessed Elizabeth and I are to be raising our kids here.

We’re able to do that in no small part due to extraordinary schools. All three of our kids went to P.S. 166, where we’ve had a fantastic experience; Phoebe’s in second grade there now. We made a pandemic decision to send Nate to Bank Street (which has also been excellent) for middle school, and he’s headed to Stuyvesant in the fall (and we will be glad to have all three kids back on the public school vacation schedule!). And Ben is finishing an

amazing first year at Booker T. Washington Middle School, which is big, academically rigorous, socioeconomically diverse, and all-around wonderful.

Nine years of being a public-school parent has taught me a lot more about public education than I ever could have learned in a government office. (I worked at the Department of Education fifteen years ago, and sometimes shudder at what I thought I knew, and how that must have come across to parents at the time!) Our schools are incredibly complex and delicate ecosystems. A great school requires effective, multi-dimensional leadership; a culture of collaboration and mutual support between administrators, teachers, and parents; and sufficient resources (financial, of course, but more than that)—and even then, its ongoing success is far from guaranteed. Even a small bump in the road can easily upset the apple cart, let alone a big bump like COVID, from which school communities are still recovering. And, of course, the obstacles to success are so much greater in communities where poverty is concentrated.

As someone who aspires to serve in the Legislature, I am constantly thinking about what role I might be able to play in building up our public schools. I was proud to be involved in fully funding Foundation Aid for the first time, but there’s still a big gap between per-pupil spending at one of the many private schools in our community and what goes into our public schools (and the PTAs at my kids’ schools still must raise money for things that should be built into their base budgets). Important work is happening to transform and improve the way we teach children to read, and this is a mountain we must climb after years of leaving countless students behind. Early childhood education remains inaccessible or unaffordable to far too many families—we must build out the infrastructure and defray the costs. Public higher education—CUNY and SUNY is an extraordinary engine for economic mobility but there, too, the State has been under-investing for decades.

I could go on, but as I write this, I’m cognizant that I need to be up early to hand out flyers at a subway station. What I’m trying to convey, I suppose, is the sense of intersection of the political and the personal that I have felt very deeply over the course of the campaign, particularly when it comes to education. I hope I won’t lose that sense if I’m fortunate enough to be elected. I know you won’t let me.

Thank you, Broadway Democrats, for everything.

Send to: The Broadway Democrats, P.O. Box 1099, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (title, honorifics, and pronouns optional)

To join the Broadway Democrats, please fill out the form below and mail with your check (made out to "Broadway Democrats") to the address at the bottom. Welcome!

In order to vote in club elections (endorsements, elections of officers, judicial convention, amendments), you must be an eligible, voting member of the Broadway Democrats. You must have attended at least one of the previous nine monthly public meetings and you must pay your dues. Dues partially defray the costs of presenting forums and putting out this newsletter. Dues are \$25; senior dues are \$10.

Membership

# The Broadway Democrats Newsletter

## June 2024

FIRST

CLASS

P.O. Box 1099  
Cathedral Station  
New York, NY 10025

Assemblymember: Daniel O'Donnell  
District Leaders:  
Curtis Arluck,  
Paula Diamond Román  
President: Mary Peppito  
Newsletter Editor: Pat Almonrode

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED