

The New York Junior League
State Advocacy Day
Albany, New York



March 18, 2026

Universal Childcare - S3415a Brisport / A5899 Hevesi

Speak Your Truth - S9699 Cleare / A687 Gonzalez - Rojas

Domestic Violence Public Housing Waitlist Priority - S871 Bailey / A9164 Paulin

Family SNAP Minimum Benefit Increase - S665 May / A1318 Gonzalez - Rojas

Promoting Safety and Accountability in Transportation - A1651 Rosenthal

[https://www.nyjl.org/advocacy/
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The New York Junior League

Since 1901, the New York Junior League (NYJL) has responded to New York City's most pressing socioeconomic challenges. Powered by more than 2,500 women volunteers, the NYJL works with over 60 community-based organizations to advance children's social-emotional learning and to provide life skills programs to youth and adults who are navigating periods of difficult transition.

Bringing their diverse experiences and talents, trained NYJL volunteers engage women and children in health, education, and arts workshops specially customized to their needs. The NYJL also advocates with state and city government for women- and children-centered policies and develops volunteers' leadership skills for service in the NYJL and on other nonprofit boards, all while cultivating a community that reinforces women's personal relationships and collective power as drivers of positive change.

Our legislative focus areas for 2025-2026 are women's health and equality, poverty relief, mental health equity, and domestic violence. The New York Junior League is advocating for the following legislation in support of women, families, and children and we respectfully request your support.

- **Universal Childcare** - S3425a Brisport / A5899 Hevesi
- **Speak Your Truth** - S9699 Cleare / A687 Gonzalez - Rojas
- **Domestic Violence Public Housing Waitlist Priority** - S871 Bailey / A9164 Paulin
- **Family SNAP Minimum Benefit Increase** - S665 May / A1318 Gonzalez - Rojas
- **Promoting Safety and Accountability in Transportation** - A1651 Rosenthal

Thank you and please contact us at advocatesgrp@nyjl.org for additional information.

Learn more about the New York Junior League here.

- Website: <https://www.nyjl.org/advocacy>
- Facebook: [New York Junior League](#)
- Instagram: [thenyjil](#); #NYJL
- LinkedIn: [New York Junior League](#)



Advocacy for WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES



nyjl.org/advocacy · advocates@nyjl.org

The New York Junior League (NYJL) champions policies that support women and children, and advocates for public policies on their behalf alongside state, federal, and city public policy makers and community partners.

For more than a century, the New York Junior League has been at the forefront of the United States' defining historical events, including immigration and the settlement movement, the suffragist movement and ratification of the 19th Amendment, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement.

In the 1990s, the NYJL began collaborating with the New York State Public Affairs Committee of the Junior League (NYSPAC), which represents 21 Junior Leagues throughout the state. Today, the NYJL remains dedicated to serving the New York City community and improving the lives of women and children with two focused committees: City Advocates for Public Policy and State Advocates for Public Policy.

The **Junior League of the City of New York, Inc.**, is an organization of women whose mission is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration, and training.

The NYJL supports community partners and NYJL volunteers who wish to advocate for policies that align with their missions.

NYJL's History of Advocacy and Achievements

1970–90s

The early decades of NYJL's advocacy focused on childhood education, job discrimination, insurance coverage, domestic violence, the Equal Rights Amendment, and reproductive health.

2006

The NYJL and NYSPAC collaborated on Timothy's Law, which increased mental health parity in health insurance coverage by eliminating some insurance limitations.

2008

The NYJL successfully championed for New York State funding to support shelters for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

2007–15

The NYJL called for the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act, which was signed into law, along with seven other bills in the Women's Equality Act, in late 2015.

2015

At State Advocacy Day, the NYJL urged legislators to pass the Paid Family Leave Act, which was enacted in the 2016 NYS Budget.

2017–19

The NYJL supported the NYC Salary History Ban, which prevents employers from asking job applicants to disclose previous salaries.

2022–26

In memory of NYJL member Michelle Go, the NYJL is advocating for the federal Michelle Alyssa Go Act to repeal the Medicare facility limitations to increase support of mental health.

2024

The NYJL supported the Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation for Kids Act, which restricts social media algorithms for minors.

2025

The NYJL successfully advocated for Universal School Meals, which was funded for the 2025-2026 school year and provides breakfast and lunch for 2.7 million students in New York.

Current Advocacy Focus Areas

The New York Junior League Advocates for Public Policy committees select bills each year that reflect the challenges facing women, children and families related to our focus areas. Committees work with lawmakers and other stakeholders to advance these priorities throughout the year, including during Legislative Breakfast and City and State Advocacy days.

Mental Health Equity

- The NYJL supports access to mental health care and coverage in New York
 - Mental health symptoms affect as many as 1 in 5 New Yorkers each year and 1 in 10 adults experience challenges that interfere with their functioning at work, family, or school.¹
 - The NYJL supports improved access to care and insurance coverage for all New Yorkers without stigma.
 - At the federal level, NYJL continues to advocate for the passage of the Michelle Alyssa Go Act which will expand mental health coverage for Medicare facilities by repealing size restrictions.

Women's Health and Equality

- The NYJL advocates for policies that improve women's access to healthcare and support gender equality.
 - The NYJL was proud to support the New York State Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which codified reproductive choice in New York when it passed in 2024. We continue to support the passage of the federal ERA.
 - NYJL City and State committees advocated for bills restricting chemicals in menstrual products, which passed in New York State in 2025. We also support policies that restrict chemicals in cosmetic products, which disproportionately affect women and people of color as both workers and consumers.
 - The NYJL supports legislation that delivers improved health outcomes for all women, including funding women's healthcare research, increasing access to medical and maternal care, expanding insurance coverage, and protecting women's health data.

Poverty Relief

- The NYJL advocates for financial policies that support families and children.
 - The NYJL successfully advocated, with a coalition of more than 350 non-profits, for the Universal School Meals as part of the FY2026 Final Enacted Budget, which was funded for the 2025-2026 school year and provides breakfast and lunch for 2.7 million students in New York.
 - More than 80% of New Yorkers cannot comfortably afford childcare for even one child. NYJL supports Universal Child Care and its expansion to cover New York families across New York City and New York State.

Domestic Violence

- The New York Junior League stands with survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and works to increase prevention and protection.
 - In the U.S., as many as 30% of women and 10% of men are victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence includes stalking, sexual and physical violence, psychological aggression, and coercive control, including emotional abuse and financial abuse.²
 - NYJL supports the Speak Your Truth Act, which protects survivors from retaliatory defamation lawsuits, helps cover legal costs if survivors are sued, and makes it safer to speak out without fear.
 - Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of family homelessness in New York City. NYJL supports legislation that expands access to affordable housing options for survivors of domestic violence.

1.) https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/mental_health_and_substance_abuse/mental_health.htm

2.) <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-statistics/>

2026 New York Junior League Advocacy Day Summary



Our legislative focus areas for 2025-2026 are women’s health and equality, poverty relief, mental health equity, and domestic violence. The New York Junior League is advocating for the following legislation in support of women, families, and children and we respectfully request your support.

| Bill Number, Sponsor and Committee Status | The Issue | How the Bill Addresses | Why It Matters |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Universal Childcare S3415A (Brisport) / A5899 (Hevesi) Senate Finance Committee, Assembly Children and Families Committee</p> | <p>Childcare in New York is among the most expensive in the nation. Many families pay more for childcare than rent or tuition, making it difficult for parents to stay in the workforce.</p> | <p>Establishes a universal childcare system for children ages six weeks to five years, ensuring families have access to affordable, high-quality childcare regardless of income.</p> | <p>Supports working families, strengthens the childcare workforce, and promotes early childhood development and long-term economic stability.</p> |
| <p>Speak Your Truth Act S9699 Cleare / A687 (Gonzalez-Rojas) Senate Codes Committee, Assembly Governmental Operations</p> | <p>Survivors of harassment, discrimination, or assault may face defamation lawsuits for speaking about their experiences, which can discourage victims from coming forward.</p> | <p>Provides legal protections for survivors who share their experiences of misconduct while maintaining safeguards against knowingly false claims.</p> | <p>Protects survivors from intimidation, encourages accountability, and supports safer workplaces and communities.</p> |
| <p>Domestic Violence Public Housing Waitlist Priority S871 (Bailey) / A9164 (Paulin) Senate Codes Committee, Assembly Governmental Operations</p> | <p>Survivors of domestic violence often face housing instability after leaving abusive situations and may struggle to access safe housing quickly.</p> | <p>Provides survivors of domestic violence with priority placement on public housing waitlists.</p> | <p>Safe and stable housing is critical for survivor safety and helps families rebuild their lives.</p> |
| <p>Family SNAP Minimum Benefit Increase S665 (May) / A1318 (Gonzalez-Rojas) Senate Third Reading, Assembly Housing Committee</p> | <p>Some SNAP recipients currently receive as little as \$23 per month, which does not meaningfully address food insecurity.</p> | <p>Increases the minimum SNAP benefit to \$100 per month for eligible households.</p> | <p>Helps families afford groceries, reduces food insecurity, and supports community health.</p> |
| <p>Promoting Safety and Accountability in Transportation A1651 (Rosenthal) Senate to be introduced, Assembly Codes</p> | <p>Riders may face safety risks and inconsistent reporting of incidents in transportation services.</p> | <p>Strengthens safety oversight and accountability measures within transportation systems.</p> | <p>Improves rider safety, increases transparency, and protects vulnerable populations.</p> |

Universal Child Care

S3415a / A5899

Sponsors: Senator Brisport and Assemblymember Hevesi

Status: Senate Finance Committee, Assembly Children and Families Committee

The Issue

- Child care in NYC is one of the greatest expenses for families averaging \$26,000 annually which far outpaces wage growth.¹
- More than 80% of NYC families cannot afford child care for even one child.²
- Child care supply has declined despite demand growing, with childcare deserts in many neighborhoods leading to long waitlists.
- Child care workers are paid low wages relative to living costs, leading to staffing shortages and limited reliable care options.³

The Solution - How this bill addresses the issue

- Expands access to affordable, high-quality child care to all families to reduce the financial burden that forces many parents to reduce work hours or leave the workforce.
- Fully funds the existing Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to ensure families, including thousands in NYC, receive subsidized care.
- Sets clear investments in childcare worker compensation to create a stable workforce.

Why It Matters

- Child care workers in NYC (93% women and 87% people of color) earn a median income of \$25,000, far below other workers. Higher wages would reduce turnover, waitlists, and improve care quality.⁴
- NYC mothers returning to the workforce are estimated to bring an additional \$900 million annually in taxable income.¹
- Low income and families of color are disproportionately affected by child care cost, with many parents in the Bronx and Brooklyn spending up to 63% of their income on care.³
- Universal child care would free up significant household income for other essentials like housing.

Our Ask

The New York Junior League urges inclusion S3415a / A5899 in the one house budget for fully funded universal child care statewide, including full funding of CCAP, improved wages for child care workers, and establishing a sustainable long term funding mechanism.

1.) <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/child-care-affordability-and-the-benefits-of-universal-provision>

2.) <https://cccnewyork.org/press-and-media/80-of-nyc-families-cant-afford-childcare-for-young-kids-study>

3.) <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families>

4.) <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/budget/fed-funding-ny/child-care-assistance>



Speak Your Truth - Expanding Survivor Anti-Defamation Protection

S9699 / A687

Sponsors: Senator Cleare and Assemblymember Gonzalez-Rojas

Status: Senate Codes Committee, Assembly Governmental Operations

The Issue

- Survivors who disclose sexual assault or harassment can face defamation lawsuits designed to intimidate and financially pressure even when their statements are truthful.
- Survivors face significant emotional barriers to speaking out. These lawsuits can cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend, creating a chilling effect against reporting abuse.
- New York's existing Anti-SLAPP law protect speech on public issues, but disclosure on sexual assault is often legally viewed as a private issue, leaving survivors excluded from protection.

The Solution - How this bill addresses the issue

- Closes the gap in New York's Anti-SLAPP protections so survivor disclosures receive the same protections as other public interest speech.
- Allows courts to dismiss meritless defamation claims earlier, reducing the financial burden on survivors who speak out.
- Deters frivolous and retaliatory lawsuits designed to silence survivors through financial pressure.

OUR ASK

The New York Junior League urges the passage of Speak Your Truth S2419 / A687 to protect survivor from retaliatory defamation lawsuits and ensure they can tell their story.

Learn more, including a link to our Memo of Support, here.

<https://www.nyjl.org/advancing-speak-your-truth-nyjls-state-advocates-for-public-policy-call-for-survivor-protections-in-the-2026-new-york-state-budget/>

Why It Matters

- Nearly 1 in 3 workplace harassment survivors never report due to fear of retaliation, including defamation suits.¹
- High profile cases highlight the growing weaponization of defamation suits against survivors. While celebrities can fight back, many survivors cannot and are silenced.
- Similar legislation has passed in California, Oregon, Maine, and Connecticut and has been introduced in 14 other states, reflecting a growing national movement to restore safety and dignity to survivor speech.

1.) https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf



Domestic Violence Survivor Public Housing Priority

S871 / A9164

Sponsors: Senator Bailey and Assemblymember Paulin

Status: Senate Third Reading, Assembly Housing Committee

The Issue

- Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in New York State - more than 40% of the families in the shelter system.¹
- Housing advocates report that NYC survivors can face years long waits for permanent public housing.²
- Many survivors leave abusive homes with limited financial resources, no safe place to stay, and immediate safety concerns. Without stable housing survivors and their children remain vulnerable to continued violence, displacement and homelessness.

The Solution - How this bill addresses the issue

- Establishes consistent statewide criteria for housing authority so domestic violence survivors receive the same priority for public housing as elderly, disabled, and homeless.
- Defines survivors as individuals who have fled abuse or would face continued violence if they remained in their residence.

Our Ask

The New York Junior League urges the Senate to vote YES on S871 and the Assembly to bring A9164 to the floor for a vote to ensure that domestic violence survivors can quickly access safe and stable housing.

Why It Matters

- More than 80% of domestic violence survivors report that access to safe housing is the most critical factor in escaping abuse and maintaining long term safety.³
- In the U.S., as many as 30% of women and 10% men are victims of domestic violence and report it impacting their functioning.
- Ensuring priority housing access allows survivors and their children to stabilize, recover, and rebuild their lives without returning to dangerous environments.

1.) <https://opdv.ny.gov/domestic-violence-statistics>

2.) <https://newdestinyhousing.org/>

3.) <https://acf.gov/ofvps/fact-sheet/domestic-violence-and-homelessness-statistics>

4.) <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-statistics/>



Family SNAP Minimum Benefit Increase

S665 / A1318

Sponsors: Senator May and Assemblymember Gonzalez-Rojas

Status: Senate Social Services Committee, Assembly Social Services Committee

The Issue

- Federal SNAP benefits in New York can be as low as \$23 per month after the emergency allotments ended, leaving many working families struggling to purchase food.^{1,2}
- Nearly 3 million New Yorkers (about 1.7 million households) rely on SNAP to afford groceries.³
- Food insecurity in New York has remained high post-pandemic, with about 1 in 9 households unable to reliably access enough food, and children disproportionately affected.⁴

The Solution - How this bill addresses the issue

- Establishes a \$100 floor in the NYS SNAP minimum benefit program to ensure that even households with low federal SNAP benefits receive a meaningful amount.
- Prevents families from falling below nutritional thresholds from insufficient federal funds.
- Supported by the Business Council of New York State.¹
- Uses existing EBT system for streamlined implementation and user access.

Why It Matters

- Raising SNAP benefits reduces food insecurity for families when 25% of NYC children are food insecure.⁵
- It's estimated that each dollar of SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic activity which increases spend at local grocery stores and small businesses.⁶
- Enhanced benefits help low income families stretch budgets, keeping families out of deeper poverty and reducing reliance on emergency food pantries.
- Many SNAP recipients are people of color and from low income communities that have faced disproportionate economic hardship, so benefit increases would advance equity and economic stability.⁵

Our Ask

The New York Junior League urges the passage of S665 / A1318 to increase the minimum family SNAP benefit to \$100/month to reduce food insecurity for families.

1.) <https://www.bcnys.org/memo/a1318-gonzalez-rojass665-may>

2.) <https://www.otda.ny.gov/programs/snap/>

3.) <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/budget/fed-funding-ny/nutritional-assistance>

4.) <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/food-insecurity-persists-post-pandemic>

5.) <https://cccnyc.org/snap-impact-food-security-advocacy-in-ny>

6.) <https://www.shfb.org/impact/blog/understanding-snap-americas-most-important-anti-hunger-program>



Promoting Safety and Accountability in Transportation Act

Consent in Rideshares - A1651

Sponsors: Senate sponsor to be assigned and Assemblymember Rosenthal

Status: Senate to be introduced, Assembly Codes

The Issue

- Reports of sexual assault during rideshares have raised safety concerns, with over 3800 sexual assaults nationally in Ubers in 2019.¹
- Rideshares have increased risk because drivers and passengers are often alone in enclosed spaces with power imbalances, trips may occur late at night and riders may be intoxicated.
- Rideshare drivers use personal vehicles without safety features common in taxis, which can increase vulnerability for passengers.²

The Solution - How this bill addresses the issue

- Establishes that consent to sexual activity cannot legally be given by either a passenger or a driver during a rideshare trip, clarifying protections in New York's criminal law.
- Recognizes that a rideshare vehicle is a professional service environment where meaningful consent between a driver and a passenger is inherently compromised.
- Strengthens prosecutors' ability to hold offenders and companies accountable when assaults occur during rideshares by clarifying existing criminal law.

Why It Matters

- Rideshare use has grown rapidly in New York and across the U.S., with millions of trips occurring each day and making passenger safety a critical public safety issue.¹
- Women make up the vast majority of victims in reported rideshare sexual assaults, accounting for over 80% of survivors, highlighting the disproportionate safety risks women face in these services.³
- Strengthening accountability drives safer industry practices and helps restore trust in transportation services relied on by millions of riders including many women and lower income riders who rely on them when public transit is unavailable.

Our Ask

The New York Junior League urges the passage A1651 to strengthen protections for rideshare riders and drivers by closing the legal gap and increasing accountability for companies.

1.) <https://trulaw.com/uber-sexual-assault-lawsuit/uber-driver-sexual-assault-statistics-and-reports/>

2.) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/06/business/uber-sexual-assault.htm>

3.) <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/about/pdf/uber-technologies-safety-shp.pdf>

