



A PUBLICATION OF  
PITTA BISHOP & DEL GIORNO LLC  
Government Relations / Consulting

## THIS WEEK IN NEW YORK

COVERING NEW YORK & CITY GOVERNMENT

SEPTEMBER 5, 2025 EDITION



## *In The News-New York State*



### **Governor Hochul Joins NYPA & Labor and Workforce Leaders for Roundtable to Discuss Scaling NY's Advanced Nuclear Workforce**

Governor Kathy Hochul detailed yesterday's meeting of an advanced nuclear energy workforce roundtable in New York City. The event brought together leaders from across New York, the U.S. and Canada for a facilitated discussion on the future of the nuclear workforce and opportunities to accelerate training and apprenticeship programs to support the expected expansion of jobs in the nuclear energy sector.

"As New York State electrifies its economy and continues to attract large manufacturers that create good-paying jobs, we must embrace an energy policy of abundance that centers on energy independence and supply chain security to ensure New York controls its energy future," Governor Hochul said. "That begins with nuclear power for the benefit of all New Yorkers. We must begin the effort now to ensure we have a sufficiently trained workforce ready to go when we start building and operating a nuclear plant..."

In June, Governor Hochul directed the Power Authority to develop at least one new nuclear energy facility with a combined capacity of no less than 1 gigawatt of electricity. The advanced nuclear energy workforce roundtable held in the Governor's New York City office, explored strategies to strengthen the workforce needed to advance New York's nuclear ambitions.

Governor Hochul called for leaders to work together on initiatives to bring good-paying jobs to New York. The roundtable was hosted by the New York Power Authority and included contributions from leadership and staff from New York State Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Building and Construction Trades Council, State University of New York (SUNY), Department of Public Service (DPS), Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), Ontario Power Generation (OPG), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA). Participants discussed their roles in nuclear workforce development and explored collaborative initiatives in education, training and other critical needs to upskill and grow the nuclear workforce in New York State.

"As New York charts its path toward a clean energy future, we cannot afford to overlook the engine of that transition—our union workforce," New York State Laborers Organizing Fund Director of Policy and Public Affairs Vincent Albanese said. "Nuclear energy is an economic lifeline, and this roundtable—and the investments in advanced nuclear it inspires—represents a moment to invest in both our electric grid, our workforce and the middle class."



## **Department of Financial Services Announces 2026 Health Insurance Premium Rates**

***Individual Plan Rates Reduced by 47.4% from Insurers' Requested Rates,  
Saving Consumers \$148.2 Million***

***Small Group Rates Reduced by 45.8% from Insurers' Requested Rates,  
Saving Small Businesses \$810.8 Million***

The New York State Department of Financial Services has approved health insurers' premium rate increases for 2026, saving consumers and small businesses approximately \$959 million. In the individual market, DFS reduced insurers' requested rates 47.4%. In the small group market, DFS reduced insurers' requested rates 45.8%. Approximately 930,000 New Yorkers are enrolled in individual and small group plans.

According to DFS, the rising cost of medical care, including in-patient hospital stays as well as rapid increases in drug prices, continues to be the main driver of health insurance premium increases. In light of the continued increases in costs of health care and other consumer goods and services, DFS held insurers' profit provisions to 1.0%.

### **INDIVIDUAL MARKET**

Insurers requested an average rate increase of 13.5% in the individual market, which DFS cut by 47.4% to 7.1% for 2026. The 2026 premium rates will be further reduced for consumers who are eligible for federal tax credits available through NY State of Health. Approximately 65% of individuals who are currently enrolled in a Qualified Health Plan through NY State of Health receive the federal premium tax credits to lower the costs of premiums. Approximately 240,000 New Yorkers are currently enrolled in individual

commercial plans. These rate decisions do not include the Essential Plan, available through NY State of Health, which is available at no premium to lower-income New Yorkers who qualify. Nearly 1.7 million New Yorkers are currently enrolled in the Essential Plan.

Company Name	Requested 2026 Rate Actions	Approved 2026 Rate Actions	Reduction
Anthem HP, LLC (Formerly Empire HealthPlus)*	10.3%	4.6%	-55.3%
CDPHP*	13.7%	12.1%	-11.7%
Emblem (HIP)*	0.9%	-9.0%	-1100.0%
Excellus*	24.8%	20.7%	-16.5%
Fidelis (NY Quality Healthcare Corp)*	8.1%	2.9%	-64.2%
Healthfirst PHSP, Inc.*	14.3%	9.0%	-37.1%
Highmark (Formerly HealthNow)*	23.9%	19.4%	-18.8%
IHBC*	38.4%	20.8%	-45.8%
MetroPlus*	10.1%	4.4%	-56.4%
MVP Health Plan*	8.0%	7.4%	-7.5%
Oscar*	17.0%	3.5%	-79.4%
UnitedHealthcare of NY Inc.*	36.6%	9.1%	-75.1%
<b>Summary</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>-47.4%</b>

\* Indicates the Company will offer products on the NY State of Health Marketplace in 2026.

## SMALL GROUP MARKET

Over 685,000 New Yorkers are enrolled in small group plans, which cover employers with up to 100 employees. Insurers requested an average rate increase of 24.0% in the small group market, which DFS cut by 45.8% to 13.0% for 2026. A number of small businesses also will be eligible for tax credits that may lower those premium costs even further, such as the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit.

Company Name	Requested 2026 Rate Actions	Approved 2026 Rate Actions	Reduction
Anthem HealthChoice Assurance, Inc. (Formerly Empire)*	10.9%	9.7%	-11.0%
CDPHP*	22.2%	22.1%	-0.5%
CDPHP UBI*	20.3%	20.0%	-1.5%
Emblem (HIP)*	6.3%	1.3%	-79.4%
Excellus*	19.6%	15.0%	-23.5%
Highmark (Formerly HealthNow)	18.0%	11.4%	-36.7%
IHBC	19.0%	14.4%	-24.2%
MVP Health Plan*	21.5%	17.9%	-16.7%
MVP Health Service Corp*	15.8%	15.8%	0.0%
Oxford Health Insurance Inc.*	28.8%	11.8%	-59.0%
UnitedHealthcare Ins Co NY	23.8%	6.8%	-71.4%
<b>Summary</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>13.0%</b>	<b>-45.8%</b>

The 2026 rates for health plans for New York's large group (for entities with over 100 employees) are still under consideration and currently out for public comment.

### **2026 LARGE GROUP HMO REQUESTED RATE ACTIONS**

Health insurers in New York have submitted their requested rates for 2026, as set forth in the charts below. These are the rates proposed by health insurers, and have not been approved by DFS. Consumer Comments submitted during the 30-day comment period will be posted periodically on the following page: [2026 Consumer Comments](#).

Insurer	Number of Members	Effective Date	Requested Year Over Year Percentage Rate Change		
			Lowest	Highest	Weighted Average
Independent Health Association	25,680	01/01/2026	+13.7%	+15.8%	+15.6%
MVP Health Plan, Inc.	25,471	01/01/2026	+9.9%	+16.8%	+12.3%
Capital District Physicians Health Plan Inc	45,764	01/01/2026	+4.9%	+23.5%	+14.8%
MetroPlus Health Plan	2,168	10/01/2025	+7.9%	+7.9%	+7.9%
Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York	24,100	01/01/2026	+8.5%	+12.7%	+9.6%
Excellus Health Plan, Inc.	9,526	01/01/2026	+8.6%	+8.6%	+8.6%
Highmark Western and Northeastern New York, Inc.	16,573	01/01/2026	+12.7%	+15.1%	+13.7%
Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York	176,061	01/01/2026	+2.5%	+6.0%	+4.9%



## **State & Local Retirement System Announces Employer Contribution Rates for SFY 2026-27**

State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli yesterday released the employer contribution rates for the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026-27. Employers' average contribution rates will increase from 16.5% to 17.6% of payroll for the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and from 33.7% to 36.5% of payroll for the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS).

NYSLRS is made up of these two systems, which pay service and disability retirement benefits to state and local public employees and death benefits to their survivors. There are nearly 3,000 participating employers in ERS and PFRS, and more than 300 different retirement plan combinations. In the SFY that ended March 31, 2025, NYSLRS paid out nearly \$16.8 billion in benefits.

"Turbulence in the financial markets along with benefit and salary changes will impact rates for SFY 2026-27," Comptroller DiNapoli said. "Our prudent management and long-term investment strategy coupled with these rates will help ensure public employees and their families receive the retirement benefits promised to them. New York state's pension fund continues to be one of the strongest and best funded in the nation."

Employer rates for NYSLRS are determined based on investment performance and actuarial assumptions recommended by NYSLRS' actuary. In addition to investment performance, other factors that impact rates include higher salaries, recent legislative changes (including reforms to tier 6), and member retirement rates.

Payments based on the new rates are due by February 1, 2027. Employers receive a discount if payment is made by December 15, 2026. The New York State Common Retirement Fund's long-term assumed rate of return will remain at 5.9%.

In addition, Comptroller DiNapoli announced that NYSLRS had a funded ratio of 92.2% as of March 31, 2025. A high funding ratio means NYSLRS has the funds available to pay out retirement benefits to its more than 1.2 million members, which includes over 735,000 current and former state and local government employees and more than 525,000 retirees and their beneficiaries.

## ***In The News-New York City***



### **12 Reputed Gang Members Indicted on Attempted Murder and Conspiracy Charges for Year-Long Shooting Spree in Southeast Queens**

Mayor Eric Adams, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, and New York City Police Department Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch announced yesterday the indictment of 12 reputed members of the Floss Money Ballers gang following a year-long investigation into multiple shootings in Southeast Queens. As alleged, violence between Floss Money Ballers and rival Blitz Gang 4 escalated with the shooting death of 18-year-old Akim Cisse outside a Springfield Gardens McDonald's in September 2024.

"...The days of 'anything goes' are over in New York City," Mayor Adams said. "For too long, these gang members were involved in a turf war that put innocent New Yorkers at risk. Today, we are sending a clear message to violent criminals who think they can terrorize our neighborhoods with reckless gunfire: you will be held accountable."

The 12 defendants were arraigned on August 28<sup>th</sup> before Queens Supreme Court Justice Bruna DiBiase and were remanded. According to the District Attorney, the defendants are variously charged in a 33-count indictment with conspiracy, attempted murder and other crimes and are responsible for driving the majority of violent crime in the neighborhoods of Springfield Gardens, Laurelton, Queens Village and the Baisley Park Houses.

"As alleged, these 12 suspected members of the Floss Money Ballers gang were responsible for the vast majority of shooting incidents in Southeast Queens over the past year," DA Katz explained. "It is no coincidence that directly following this takedown – a culmination of a year-long investigation by my office and the NYPD – these same neighborhoods reported zero shootings over Labor Day weekend. We will not relent in our work to dismantle gangs in this borough."

District Attorney Katz said the gang was formed from the remnants of Money World that was [dismantled in early 2023](#). The shootings were part of a series of escalating acts of violence between FMB and their perceived rivals, Blitz Gang 4 (BG4), since mid-2024. Criminal cases involving alleged BG4 members have been dealt with separately through formal dispositions or remain under investigation.

“These alleged Floss Money Ballers crew members used violence as a currency, turning grudges into gunfights across Queens,” NYPD Commissioner Tisch said while thanking NYPD investigators and the Queens District Attorney’s Office for their commitment to keeping New Yorkers safe. “Today, their reign of terror is coming to an end, and an entire violent gang is no longer endangering our communities.”



## **NYC Council Leadership Calls on Board of Elections to Reject Three of Mayor Adams’ Ballot Proposals for Using Language That Seeks to Deceive Voters by Concealing Their Effect**

This week leaders from both the Majority and Minority conferences of the New York City Council urged the New York City Board of Elections (BOE) to reject three ballot proposals (Proposals 2, 3 and 4)—which impact the Council’s involvement in the City’s land use process--submitted by Mayor Eric Adams’ Charter Revision Commission for the 2025 General Election, due to their deceptive and inaccurate language making them noncompliant with state law.

In a [letter](#) to BOE commissioners, the request for the proposals’ rejection highlights that New York State Municipal Home Rule Law requires that referenda “clearly ... indicate the effect of their approval.” However, the Council contends the language for these three proposals fails to disclose that they eliminate the voting authority of the City Council on a range of public land use decisions, which is currently the only vote by elected representatives within the process. They would shift authority for land use decisions from elected City Council to unelected appointees, the majority of whom are chosen by the mayor. Yet, neither the proposals’ questions nor their associated abstracts clearly state these major changes.

The Council asserts the misleading nature of Mayor Adams’ ballot proposal language leaves voters without a clear understanding of the implications of their decisions and therefore, fails to meet statutory requirements and a basic commitment to democracy that respects voters’ informed consent and will.

“When New York City voters weigh in on ballot questions this November, they deserve to know the impact of their decision in clear and honest terms,” said Speaker Adrienne Adams. “Mayor Adams’ ballot questions 2, 3, and 4 attempt to mislead voters by hiding their real impact of eliminating the public’s power over land use decisions that allow new development. This major change to remove the only democratically elected entity with voting power in the land use process undermines New Yorkers’ ability to secure more affordable housing and investments for their neighborhoods. The Board of Elections should protect voters and voting rights by rejecting Mayor Adams’ ballot proposals 2, 3, and 4 for intentionally concealing their impact from voters at the ballot.”

# *Briefs*

## **NYC Council Announces CUNY Social Work Fellows Program to Address Mental Health Care Workforce Shortage**

In response to the growing mental health crisis in New York City and the workforce shortage limiting access to care, Speaker Adrienne Adams launched a new CUNY Social Work Fellows program to bolster the highly in-demand workforce. Established with Council funding in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 city budget and doubled in the FY 26 budget, the pilot initiative provides scholarships to nearly 100 students pursuing a master's degree in social work at various CUNY schools. The program aims to reduce financial barriers for students entering the social work field and to strengthen the pipeline of behavioral health professionals.

Modeled after the NYC Teaching Fellows and funded through \$1 million in Council discretionary funding in FY 25 and \$2 million in FY26, the initiative stems from the Council's Mental Health Roadmap. The Social Work Fellows program is currently supporting 95 students pursuing their Master of Social Work (MSW) degrees at CUNY institutions, including Hunter College, College of Staten Island, Lehman College, and York College. An additional 39 students received assistance with licensing exam fees and test preparation. To qualify, students must be employed by a city public agency or non-profit organization serving the public sector. After graduation, recipients are encouraged to work within the City and serve high-need areas through non-profits or city and state agencies.

"As New York City faces a growing mental health crisis, it is imperative that we ensure a strong pipeline of workers to help provide the necessary care and treatment to New Yorkers," said Speaker Adams. "A strong behavioral health workforce requires acknowledging the difficult work required of these jobs and breaking down the financial barriers that prevent talented and passionate people from pursuing them. By establishing this Social Work Fellows program, the Council is building a sustainable pipeline for a diverse and qualified mental health care workforce that reflects the communities it serves. This initiative will help confront a severe workforce shortage and advancing an important solution that can be scaled up with deeper investments."

## **Fed Releases Preliminary List of Jobs that Could Qualify for Tax-Free Tips Under the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB Act)**

The U.S. Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have released a preliminary list of jobs that could qualify for tax-free tips under the new One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB Act). The [preliminary list](#) includes over 100 occupations, including detailed job descriptions and example titles.

In addition to requiring that qualified tips must be received in an occupation that customarily and regularly received tips on or before December 31, 2024, the OBBB Act provides that tips do not qualify for the deduction if they are received in the course of certain specified trades or businesses -- including the fields of health, performing arts, and athletics. Treasury and the IRS anticipate issuing additional guidance on the types of occupations and trades or businesses that are subject to this carve-out.

The official proposed list of such occupations will be published in the Federal Register as part of forthcoming proposed regulations from the Treasury Department (Treasury) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Treasury and the IRS anticipate that the official proposed list will be substantially the same as this preliminary list. Public comments will be requested on the official proposed list of occupations and other aspects of the proposed regulations.

## **Fall Foliage Report**

Mark your calendars: the first fall foliage report of the 2025 season is coming September 10! New York State boasts one of the longest and most colorful fall foliage seasons in the country, typically starting in September and ending in November.

I LOVE NY's weekly fall foliage reports track the changing colors across the state's 11 vacation regions to help travelers plan their trip to experience fall in New York State at its peak.

For more than 40 years, I LOVE NY has issued weekly fall foliage reports and, this year, more than 90 volunteers will track changes throughout the season. Their on-location observations will detail prevailing leaf colors, percentage of total transition, and total progression relative to peak conditions for the upcoming weekend. Peak conditions are considered the best that the foliage will look during a given season, and generally occur between late September and mid-November, depending on the location within the State. Reports are available online at [iloveny.com/foliage](https://iloveny.com/foliage).

## **FANS for the CURE Pitches for Support During National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month & the Met's Home Stretch Run**

September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month (PCAM) in the United States, a time dedicated to educating the public about prostate cancer, encouraging early detection and regular check-ups, and fostering conversations about men's health to help reduce deaths from the disease. And Mets bench coach John Gibbons has stepped up to the plate for men's health by pledging a personal donation to [Fans for the Cure](#) based on every Mets win and home run during this 2025 season.

**FANS for the CURE** is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to positively influencing the lives of men by organizing medical, educational, and awareness programs focused on prostate cancer. Started in 2003 by broadcaster Ed Randall after his own diagnosis of the disease, Fans for the Cure planted its roots and early efforts inside Minor League baseball stadiums and now has a 12-month schedule that includes free screenings, community health events, Women's and Men's Support Groups, patient advocacy, physician referrals, and an award-winning podcast.

As the Mets head down the home stretch in the pennant race, Fans for the Cure is inviting Mets fans to join the fight in honor of John's 9-for-19 season with the 1986 champions with your own pledge of \$1.00 per Mets win + \$1.00 per Mets home run this season or any amount that feels right.

Your pledge goes directly to support Fans for the Cure's free prostate cancer screenings (they screened 303 men in Citi Field in May & screen at Yankee Stadium on September 25th), educational workshops, online support groups and advocacy efforts aimed at improving early detection and access to care across the country. For more information, please email Ed at [info@fansforthecure.org](mailto:info@fansforthecure.org).

# Coming Up

## ***New York State***

### ***Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup>***

***Board of Regents Meeting***, Room 217 – 89 Washington, Albany, 9 a.m.

### ***Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>***

***Cannabis Control Board Meeting***, Hilton Albany – 40 Lodge Street, 11 a.m.

***Board of Regents Meeting***, Room 217 – 89 Washington, Albany, 11:30 a.m.

### ***Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>***

***New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Government Commissioners Meeting***,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room – 540 Broadway, Albany, 10 a.m.

***New York State Public Campaign Finance Board Commissioners meeting***, State Board Offices – 40 North Pearl Street, Albany, 2 p.m.

## ***New York City***

### ***Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>***

***Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises***, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10 a.m.

### ***Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>***

***Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises***, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

***Committee on Finance***, Committee Room – City Hall, 10:30 a.m.

***Committee on Land Use***, Council Chambers – City Hall, 10:45 a.m.

***City Council State Meeting***, Council Chambers – City Hall, 1:30 a.m.

### ***Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>***

***Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection***, Council Chamber – City Hall, 1 p.m.

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