



## Policy Matters – July 2019

Welcome to **Policy Matters** – Empire Justice Center’s newsletter to catch you up on all of our policy advocacy efforts to **make the law work for all New Yorkers!**

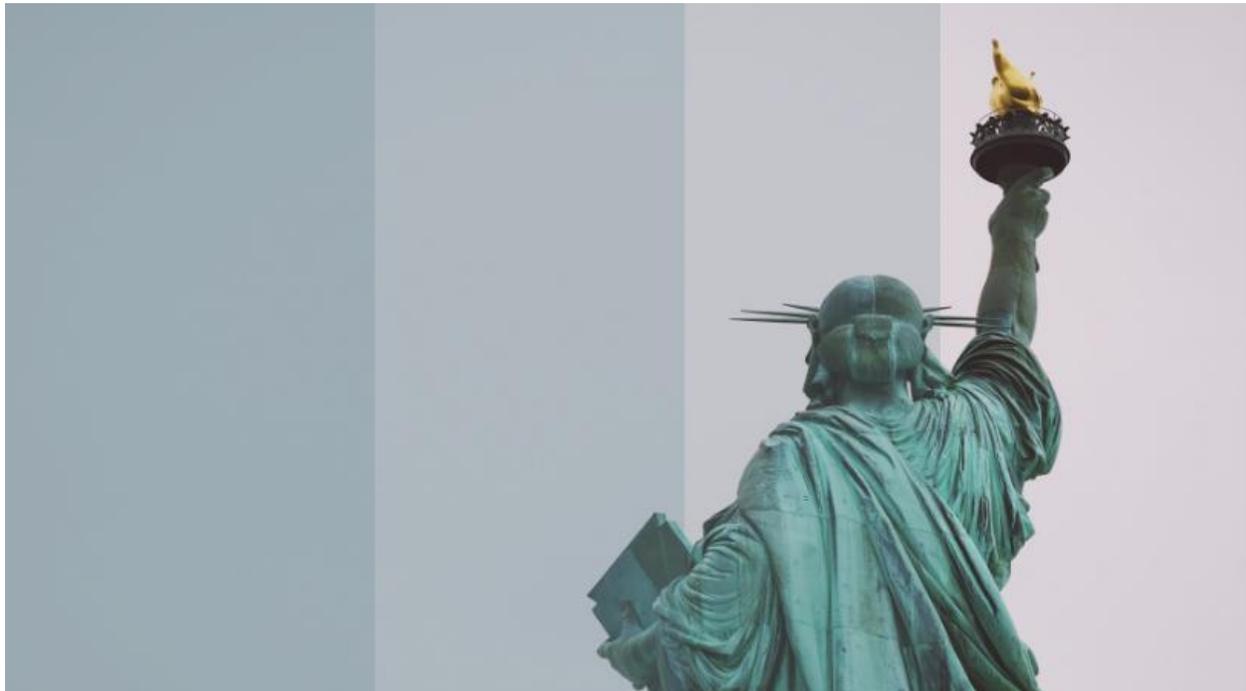
In this edition we’ll share this year’s legislative victories, and a few areas where we’ve built support for next year; plus the end of one leadership era, and the beginning of another.

### Legislative Session Ends, Bringing Significant Wins on Long-Standing Issues Good for Low Income New Yorkers

This NYS legislative session brought progress on many long fought issues that will be good for low income New Yorkers. We had early success on GENDA, the transgender rights bill, and budget victories that continued funding for legal services for homeowners and immigrants, and continued to build victories on a number of issues, including domestic violence, crime victims, consumer rights, and child care.

We are especially proud to announce the passage of **Securing Wages Earned Against Theft (SWEAT) (A.0486/S.2844)**; **protections against sanctions for low income and disabled New Yorkers (A.2455/S.3840)**; and the **Green Light NY bill (A.3675/ S.1747)** extending driver’s

licenses to all qualified drivers, including immigrants. Read more about these and other notable Empire Justice victories in our [end of session press statement](#).



## 2019 Legislative Victories at a Glance

The following is a thorough, though not exhaustive, list of some of our most notable 2019 legislative victories:

- Addressing Community Blight – [Tax Foreclosure Waiting Period \(A.4403/S.1864\)](#)
- Child Care – [Child Care Cost Estimation Study \(A.0580/S.0245A\)](#)
- Child Care – [Child Care Subsidies for Parents who Work the Night Shift \(A.0413A/S.3420\)](#)
- Domestic Violence – [Right to Call 911 \(A.2665/S.4657\)](#)
- Domestic Violence – [Victims’ Rights Notice Bill \(A.7395/S.6158\)](#)
- Homeowner Protections – [Budget Provision to Require Notices and Mandatory Settlement Conferences \(A.2005/S.1505, Part W\)](#)
- Homeowner Protections – [Prevent Deed Theft and Foreclosure Rescue Scams \(A.1408/S.6171\)](#)
- Immigration – [Green Light NY \(A.3675/S.1747\)](#)

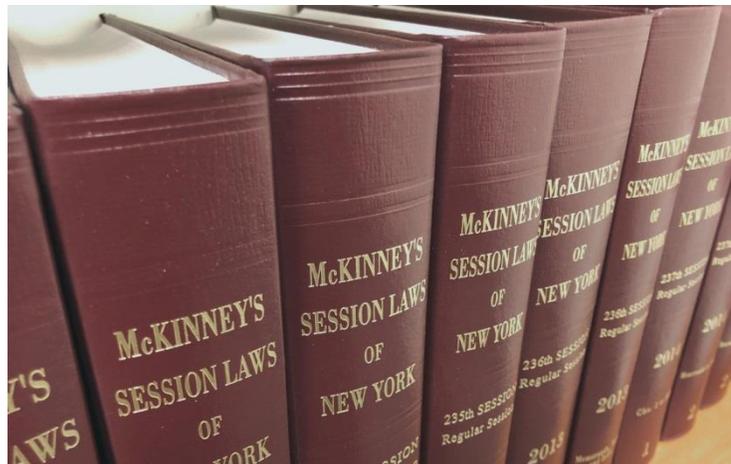
- **Public Assistance** – [Protections for Low Income and Disabled New Yorkers \(A.2455/S.3840\)](#)
- **Public Assistance** – [Treating Physician Bill \(A.4236/S.4641\)](#)
- **Student Rights** – [Discrimination Protections Returned to Public Schools \(A.3425/S.4901\)](#)
- **Student Loan Borrower Protections** – [Budget Provision to License and Regulate Student Loan Servicers \(A.2008/S.1508\)](#)
- **Transgender Rights** – [Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act \(GENDA\) \(A.0747/S.1047\)](#)
- **Worker Rights** – [Securing Wages Earned Against Theft \(SWEAT\) \(A.0486/S.2844\)](#)

**Legislative Funding Victories:** Earlier in the session we successfully secured continued, stable funding for the following important programs serving low income New Yorkers:

- [Community Health Advocates \(CHA\)](#) – Helping New Yorkers navigate health insurance.
- [Disability Advocacy Program \(DAP\)](#) – Helping disabled New Yorkers access federal disability benefits.
- [Foreclosure Prevention Services](#) – Helping homeowners stay in their homes.
- [Liberty Defense Project](#) – Helping immigrant New Yorkers with legal needs.
- [Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program \(MCCAP\)](#) - Helping Seniors and Disabled New Yorkers navigate health insurance.

## Building On Our Progress

We certainly didn't get everything we wanted this year, but even on some of the bills we couldn't bring across the finish line we were able to make significant progress! Empire Justice will use this momentum to push towards passage during next legislative session:



- [Consumer Credit Fairness Act \(A/6909/S.4827\)](#): This bill moved to third reading in both houses.

- [Home Stability Support \(A.1620/S.2375\)](#): The bill moved to third reading in the Senate – the farthest it’s gone in that House since its introduction in 2017.
- [Update New York’s Self-Sufficiency Standard \(A.0339/S.5552\)](#): This bill didn’t make it out of the Assembly, but did pass the Senate.

And as usual, we produced memos for a number of bills even as session was drawing to a close:

- [Cap Interest Rates In Auto Retail Installment Contracts \(A.7585/S.5947\)](#) – This bill would cap interest rates in auto retail installment contracts, reducing the ability of auto dealers to impose extremely costly and often unaffordable credit terms on low-income New Yorkers when they purchase new or used vehicles.
- [Equal Access to Quality Child Care Cap Co-Payments at 20% of Income over Poverty \(A.3110/S.1546\)](#) - A cap of 20% of household income that exceeds the poverty level would provide equitable treatment of similarly situated low-income families across the state, and assure that New York State complies with federal law requiring that child care co-payments are affordable.

## Pushing Back on Damaging Federal Rule Changes

We submitted a comment letter, [Keep Ability-To-Pay Requirements for Payday and Vehicle Loans](#), to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), strongly opposing the CFPB's proposal to rescind one of the key requirements of the Bureau's payday and vehicle title loan rule – that lenders check a borrower’s ability-to-repay before making the loan. This common sense protection ensures that a borrower can repay without re-borrowing and without defaulting on other expenses.

We also submitted comments [opposing proposed changes to the Health and Human Services poverty guidelines](#). Shrinking the annual rate of increase in the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) will artificially push people “over” the poverty line and will only worsen existing flaws in the annual assessment.

## In the News

The New York State Office of Victim Services [announced millions of dollars in grants to fund civil legal services for crime victims](#), as well as the launch of a website to help crime victims find

information and free legal assistance, which Empire Justice helped to develop. You can learn more about our crime victim work [here](#).



## A Celebration of Leadership

June was certainly a month for transitions. We celebrated the career of our retiring President and CEO, **Anne Erickson**, at our [Celebration of Leadership](#). As President and CEO, Anne led Empire Justice Center through tremendous growth, expanding offices and services and growing the annual budget from \$1.2 Million to more than \$7 Million.

Over the past 30 years, Anne has been a stalwart leader in the efforts to strengthen and expand access to and funding for civil legal services in New York State. Her early work with the legal services community helped pave the way for the first allocation of general funding for civil legal services in New York in 1993.

More than 100 people joined us throughout the evening, **helping to raise more than \$41,000 to help Empire Justice continue to make the law work for all New Yorkers**, especially those who need its protection the most. Please take a moment to check out the event [video](#) and [photos](#),

or click through to our website to see the [event journal](#) and [sponsors](#) and celebrate this moment with us.



## Our New President and CEO - Kristin Brown!

After a thorough national search, Empire Justice’s own **Kristin Brown** was chosen to take on the mantle and lead the organization into its new era as our next President and CEO! Anyone who spends much time at the NYS Capitol during legislative session will probably recognize Kristin, who has been leading our successful public policy and legislative advocacy since 2004.

Kristin has led numerous multi-million dollar funding campaigns, designed the process which determines our annual budgetary and legislative agenda, and advanced countless issues to expand access to justice in New York State.

Upon her selection, Kristin said, “I am incredibly honored to have been chosen to lead Empire Justice Center into the next decade and look forward to working with our talented Board and staff to pursue cutting edge legal advocacy on behalf of low income and marginalized communities.”

Read more about the process and the appointment in our [press release announcement](#), and coverage from the [Daily Record](#).

## Thanks For Reading!

We'll be taking a short break this August, so our next edition won't be out until September. In the meantime, if you'd like to keep up with our work, follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), or visit the [Policy Central](#) page on our website.

***The Empire Justice Policy Team***