

Emiljana Ulaj

Legislator, 9th District
Chair, Labor & Human Rights

**Committee Assignments:**

Legislation
Economic Development
Law & Major Contracts

MEMORANDUM

TO: Vedat Gashi, Chair, Board of Legislators

FROM: Emiljana Ulaj, Legislator – 9th District

DATE: April 10, 2025

RE: The Village of Croton-on-Hudson's Annual Legislative Priorities supported jointly with Westchester County

Please add the attached resolution to the agenda of the April 21, 2025 Board of Legislators meeting for referral to the Legislation committee.

On motion of TRUSTEE SIMON, seconded by TRUSTEE NICHOLSON, the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Village of Croton-on-Hudson, New York, with a 5-0 vote.

Resolution #65-2025

WHEREAS, the Village of Croton-on-Hudson introduced the practice of establishing Annual Legislative Priorities to streamline responses to legislative proposals affecting the Village and optimize the allocation of limited advocacy resources; and

WHEREAS, a document outlining the Village's Legislative Program and Project Priorities for 2025 has been drafted,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that the Village of Croton-on-Hudson adopts and approves the 2025 Legislative Program and Project Priorities attached and incorporated herein by this reference,

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that the Village Clerk is hereby directed to send this resolution and legislative packet to the federal, state and county legislators representing the Village of Croton-on-Hudson.

Dated: March 26, 2025



Village of Croton-on-Hudson

Legislative, Program and Project Priorities

2025

March 2025

**Stanley H. Kellerhouse Municipal Building
One Van Wyck Street
Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520-2501
www.crotononhudson-ny.gov**



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March 2025

Dear Colleagues:

The pages which follow summarize the legislative, program and project priorities for the Village of Croton on Hudson for 2025.

They represent the Village's objectives at the state and federal levels in a number of key areas including housing, sustainability, public safety, transportation and economic development.

We look forward to working with you this year towards achieving progress in each of the important subject areas discussed in this document.

Thank you on behalf of all of Croton's residents for your help as we continue to strengthen Croton for the promising years ahead. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

Brian Pugh
Mayor

Len Simon
Deputy Mayor

Nora Nicholson
Trustee

Cara Politi
Trustee

Maria Slippen
Trustee

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Priority State Legislation

As the 2025 legislative session in Albany continues, Croton-on-Hudson has a strong interest in the certain measures being considered, as described below.

AIM and TMA Programs. The state Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) program has been of great benefit to Croton, returning local dollars from Albany for widespread Village uses. Last year, following 15 years of not increasing the program, the legislature provided level funding for AIM but also added \$50 million for a new Temporary Municipal Assistance (TMA) program to supplement AIM funding. The Governor has proposed to continue TMA at that level in 2025. In its recent action, the Senate accepted the Governor's proposal but the Assembly increased TMA by \$50 million for a total of \$100 million.

Croton-on-Hudson supports the higher level for TMA but also believes that AIM itself should be increased to make up for the years in which it has been eroded by inflation.

Health Care Services for Immigrants Ineligible for Federal Participation. Provides for coverage for health care services under the basic health program for individuals whose immigration status renders them ineligible for federal financial participation and who meet additional requirements (S3762, A1710)

Croton on Hudson supports this proposed legislation and urges its enactment.

New York Health Act. The Legislature is considering the New York Health Act (NYHA) which would create a state-sponsored single-payer health program called New York Health that would provide coverage to all residents of the state including all benefits covered by Medicare, Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and those mandated under the Affordable Care Act. According to a study by the Rand Corporation, New York could expand coverage without substantial increases in overall health care spending.

Croton-on-Hudson has a strong interest in access to affordable health care for all of its residents. The New York Health Act is currently being discussed by numerous interests in Albany. The Village thanks all of those currently working hard to strengthen health care access and affordability in our state and looks forward to reviewing the product of these deliberations at that time.

Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act. Introduced by State Senator Pete Harckham, this legislation requires companies with a net annual income of over \$1 million selling, offering for sale, or distributing covered packaging materials and products to reduce consumer packaging and improve recycling and recycling infrastructure. The bill includes supporting reusable and refill infrastructure, financially supporting municipal recycling programs, reducing toxins in packaging and requiring producers of products to take responsibility for end-of-life solutions to product packaging. It is estimated to save taxpayers in New York State over \$200 million each year and would reduce Village recycling costs.

Croton-on-Hudson strongly supports this legislation as an appropriate solution to the rising cost of recycling of packaged materials, which has substantially grown since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. The Village looks forward to working with Senator Harckham towards enactment of this important initiative.

Parkland Exemption for Renewable Projects. Under current law, municipalities must request an act from the Legislature to repurpose or “alienate” parkland including airspace directly above real property being used for vehicle parking. As New York continues its movement towards renewable energy, interest in solar projects in the airspace above vehicle parking has increased. Through the leadership of Senator Harckham, last session the State Senate passed legislation to lift the “alienation” definition for solar projects over parking lots in parks. His bill would allow solar energy projects under 2 megawatts, located directly above real property, which are currently being used for vehicle parking, to bypass the procedure of requesting an act from the Legislature. This would result in certain solar projects being implemented more efficiently, saving time, and reducing the carbon footprint. Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg introduced companion legislation in the State Assembly in the last session but it did not pass.

Croton-on-Hudson has sought for several years to install solar canopies in the Croton Landing parking lot but this effort has been stalled by New York’s “alienation of parkland” law which makes no exception for solar on parking lots. This legislation would also assist Westchester County which seeks to develop a solar canopy at the Croton Point Park parking lot. We applaud Senator Harckham’s sensible approach to this problem. We are grateful his bill was passed in the Senate in the last session and are hopeful it will again this year. We thank Assemblywoman Levenberg for her efforts towards passage in the Assembly. We urge the Assembly to pass this bill as well, and the Governor to sign the finalized version.

Pro - Housing Communities. In February 2024 Croton was very pleased to be designated as one of the state’s first 20 Pro-Housing Communities, a program established by the Governor to recognize and reward municipalities actively working to add to their housing supply. Only Pro-Housing Communities can apply for certain state assistance programs, such as: (1) Downtown Revitalization Initiative; (2) NY Forward; (3) Regional Council Capital Fund; (4) New York Main Street; (5) Market New York capital grants; and (6) Mid-Hudson Momentum Fund.

Croton-on Hudson urges full funding for these programs in 2025. Croton intends to apply or reapply for several of these in the future, which are supported in the Governor’s budget and in the budgets enacted by the assembly and Senate. Croton also supports the funding allocated to the Regional Economic Development Councils for regional priority projects.

Public Sector Compensation. Public sector salaries cannot keep pace with the private sector. The most cost-effective, universal way to positively impact public sector hiring and retention is to improve the Tier 6 pension plan. The Tier 6 pension plan, enacted in 2012, significantly increase contributions and reduces benefits for all public employees in New York hired since then. The pension plan has a higher minimum age of 63 for public sector workers to receive full retirement benefits. This is particularly unfair for those that work in physically demanding jobs.

Croton-on-Hudson supports a fiscally responsible fix to Tier 6 that will enable the public sector to compete effectively with private firms for talent and better serve residents.

Tax Exemptions for Two Veterans Living in the Same Household. This legislation provides additional tax exemptions on qualifying residential real property where two or more qualified veterans live in the same household (A.2631).

Croton on Hudson supports this proposed legislation and urges its enactment.

Transportation Assistance for Village Mobility. The Governor's proposed budget maintains funding at current year levels for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), the key state transportation assistance program our Village receives. The Senate proposes to increase CHIPS by \$125 million, while the Assembly maintains it at current year levels. The Assembly proposal also includes \$50 million for municipal ADA-compliance projects.

Croton-on-Hudson supports the higher level for CHIPS as well as the new funding for municipal ADA compliance.

Volunteer Fire Infrastructure and Response Equipment – The Governor's Budget includes \$25 million for the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure and Response Equipment (V-FIRE) grant program, which would allow departments to renovate or construct compliant fire stations equipped to meet the needs of modern firefighting. Both the Senate and the Assembly have added \$10 million to that figure for a total of \$35 million.

Croton-on-Hudson supports the Assembly and Senate levels for the V-FIRE program.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Funding. The Governor's Budget includes an additional \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The Senate funded the Governor's request, but also added \$100 million for a dedicated funding stream for municipal water and sewer systems (SWAP) that could be used to supplement both their water and sewer infrastructure preventive maintenance costs as well as new capital projects and \$100 million for Lead Service Line Replacement. The Assembly proposed \$600 million for CWIA drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, of which \$100 million would be for Lead Service Line Replacement.

Croton-on-Hudson supports the higher level for the CWIA program, the funding for lead service line replacement and the new dedicated municipal water and sewer infrastructure program, a goal long-sought by NYCOM.

Zero Emission Transportation. Legislation currently being considered in Albany, S1456 and A1331, would require certain watercraft, aircrafts, and trains to use clean energy, including ensuring such vehicles are zero-emissions. It would also require the use of zero-emission passenger trains along the Metro-North and Long Island Railroads in New York, and zero-emission work trains within the New York City subway system by 2035. It would also require NYSEERDA to study zero-emission commercial vehicles, the use of renewable energy in publicly funded airports, and the use of sustainable aviation fuel.

S1456 and A1331 would have a beneficial impact on both transportation and environmental quality. Croton-on-Hudson supports this legislation and urges its enactment.

Legislation Jointly Supporting with Westchester County. Croton is pleased to join County Executive Ken Jenkins and the County Board of Legislators in supporting these important legislative initiatives at the state level, each of which will benefit our County and the Village:

1. Extend the Electric Generation Facility Cessation Mitigation Program. Westchester requests that the July 1, 2025 sunset of the Electric Generation Facility Cessation Mitigation Program be lifted, and the 7 year eligibility period be waived so that the County and additional local entities impacted by the closure of Indian Point can continue to rely on this funding until the fund is depleted.

2. Amend the State Transportation Operating Assistance Formula. Westchester County requests that the State Operating Assistance (STOA) Formula be amended to provide Westchester County financial parity with Nassau County's transit assistance.

3. Support the Expansion and Enhancement of Emergency Medical Services. Westchester County urges the adoption of legislation that relates to emergency medical services (EMS) and includes the establishment of an EMS quality and sustainability assurance program, a statewide comprehensive EMS plan, and an EMS training program.

4. Utility Financial Standards. Westchester County supports requiring electric, gas, steam and water-works corporations to adopt the common equity ratio and rate of return on equity authorized by the public service commission unless such utility can successfully demonstrate that such authorized rates do not meet their capital and/or operating needs (S1896 -Mayer and A1028 -Barrett)

5. Climate Resilience. Westchester County supports enactment of the Climate Resilient New York Act which establishes the office of resilience and a resilience task force to assess and identify climate related threats and develop a statewide resilience plan (S3590- (Harckham and A10573- Pfeffer, Amato)

6. Contaminant Removal. Westchester County supports legislation to direct the department of environmental conservation to establish an installation grant program and a maintenance rebate program for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances removal treatment. (S3972- Harckham and A216 -Burdick)

Legislation Jointly Supporting with NYCOM

Croton-on-Hudson is pleased to support these priorities with our colleagues throughout the state as represented by the New York Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials, all of which would benefit our Village:

1. Remove the Tax Cap's Disincentives for Economic Growth. NYCOM recommends that the tax cap be amended to: (1) exclude municipal expenditures on public infrastructure

from the tax cap calculation, just as school districts currently do; and (2) exclude the self-imposed levies of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) from the tax cap calculation (A.1269 – McDonald, S.1019 – Cooney). These changes will increase tax cap compliance and maximize investment in economic growth and community development.

2. Enhance Tools to Address Vacant, Distressed and Abandoned property. NYCOM supports: (a) Strengthen Enforcement of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code; (b) Increase State Support for Local Code Enforcement; (c) Authorize Administrative Adjudication of Local Code Violations; (d) Authorize Administrative Adjudication of Local Code Violations; (e) Allow Municipalities to Pierce the Corporate Veil of Shell Corporations that Abandon Properties use; and (f) Improve New York’s Zombie Properties Law, mortgage-delinquent properties that have been abandoned by the owner.

3. Create Financial Incentives to Revitalize Properties. NYCOM supports the following legislative proposals that would facilitate the remediation and revitalization of properties: (a) Authorize a Local Option Property Tax Exemption to Facilitate Renovation and Redevelopment of Properties; and (b) Strengthening of the New York Tax Increment Financing Law.

4. Strengthen Vehicle and Traffic Regulation and Enforcement. Red light and speed cameras have been authorized by the State Legislature on a limited basis in specific municipalities across New York. This technology is proving to be a cost-effective way for local governments to help reduce running red lights and speeding in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and school zones. Consequently, the authority to install and enforce red light and speed cameras should be expanded statewide.

5. Provide Funding for Water Contamination Testing and Source Water Protection. NYCOM supports the State assisting local governments in developing resources and programs to keep drinking water sources free from contamination. Additional mandates must be predicated on state funding made available to help cover the expense of both the testing and installation of required remedial systems, including costs associated with pending or future federal regulations.

6. Authorize Local Occupancy Tax Statewide. Currently, local governments wishing to impose their own local occupancy tax must seek special authorization from the State Legislature allowing them to impose such a tax. The proliferation of short-term rentals throughout the State, however, has made this an issue for many communities. Consequently, the State should permit all cities and villages to adopt an occupancy tax via the passage of a local law and make such tax applicable to short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb).

Legislation Jointly Supporting with the Westchester Municipal Officials Association

Croton is pleased to join with WMOA to support these policy initiatives which would benefit municipalities throughout the County including Croton-on-Hudson.

1. Reform Civil Service. Municipalities often struggle to attract and retain the best talent under the current civil service system. The process of posting and offering exams, scoring them, and establishing lists that can be in place for up to four years is too slow and restrictive.

More titles should be under a continuous recruitment examination format with online testing and immediate scoring. The “Rule of Three” selection process is also too limiting and should be modified to be Pass/Fail or at least a “Rule of Five.” We also support enabling a change in classification that would not require a civil service exam where other professional state licenses or certifications are already required.

2. Fees for Services to Tax Exempt Property. WMOA supports legislation that provides a local option to charge tax exempt properties for the cost of services such as police protection, fire protection, street and highway construction and maintenance of lighting, sanitary, and water systems.

3. MTA Station Maintenance Fee. WMOA supports legislation to review the annual \$19 million tax levy for station maintenance collected by the county to determine whether the taxes raised exceed the likely cost of the services communities receive.

4. Reform the Bottle Bill. WMOA seeks changes to the existing “bottle bill” to incentivize recycling, reduce waste, and stabilize the redemption system. Proposals would expand the containers included in the deposit program, raise the deposit to ten cents, raise the handling fee to six cents, and stabilize the redemption system with grants for new centers and reverse vending machines. The 5-cent deposit has been in place since the Returnable Container Act was enacted in 1983 so it is time this fee is increased.

5. Renew the Clean Energy Communities (CEC) Program. The NYSEERDA CEC program provided important grant assistance for communities striving to invest in clean-energy solutions, including Croton which achieved the status of the top CEC in New York State. CEC should be renewed.

Local Projects Requiring State Assistance

In the year ahead, as Croton works to advance its economic development, sustainability and public safety objectives, it is seeking the assistance of the Village’s state delegation on a number of key priorities. We are extraordinarily grateful to Senator Pete Hareckham and Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg for their previous work in securing state funding to aid our municipality and deeply appreciate their efforts in assisting Croton on these pending priorities which include:

New York Forward. Governor Hochul created the NY Forward program to invigorate downtowns in New York’s smaller communities such as Villages like Croton. Croton’s designation as a “Pro-Housing Community” meant that it was eligible to apply for the latest round of NY Forward. The Village submitted “Croton-on-the-Move” as its NY Forward - Round 3 application. It contained six transformative projects including bicycle-pedestrian enhancements, assistance to our business community, arts and cultural investments centered around one of the Villages business district parks, and infrastructure improvements designed to bring about greater transportation safety in our business districts as well as help development of future housing opportunities. While the Village was disappointed that its application was not funded in this round, we are determined to work with the Mid-Hudson

Regional Economic Council to bolster our application for the next round and will seek the assistance of our state delegation in getting it over the finish line on the second try.

Mid-Hudson Momentum Fund. The Village has submitted an application seeking \$2,500,000 to expand its sanitary sewer network in the Mount Airy and Lounsbury neighborhoods, as well as replace an existing water tank in the Mount Airy neighborhood. These improvements will assist current homeowners, protect the environment, and support potential future housing opportunities in these areas of the Village.

Croton All-Electric Microtransit. Croton has a pending application with the NY State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) for operation of an all-electric microtransit system. The Village has partnered directly with a turnkey service provider, Circuit, to handle day-to-day operations of the system with control and oversight from the Village. The program would feature on-demand on-service and accessibility. Implementation would lead to reduced carbon emissions, improved mobility and access, economic empowerment and reduced parking congestion. Requested Total Funding over 5 Years is \$3,277,120, including Operating Expenses of \$2,937,480 and capital expenses: \$339,640.

Gouveia Park. A stunning 15-acre public park with lush greenspace and scenic views of the Hudson River, Gouveia Park has for years remained deprived of the necessary rehabilitation to ensure its future accessibility for all members of the public. The estate of Laurel Gouveia generously donated the property along with a one- million-dollar endowment, which will cover property improvements such as the sewer connection, lighting, drainage, and paving of access roads. The Village is seeking \$750,000 in state funding to facilitate improvements to the main house building located on the property, which will be used to house Croton's Recreation Department and Recreation, Event, Arts and Learning (REAL) Space.

South Riverside and Municipal Sidewalks. Two of the most heavily traveled thoroughfares in Croton, South Riverside Avenue and Municipal Place, have sat for an extended period of time without the existence of sidewalks in multiple sections alongside the two roadways. Both Municipal Place and South Riverside Avenue are roads owned entirely by New York State, which has failed to remedy these longstanding gaps. Additionally, the opening of Maple Commons, a thirty-three-unit, all-affordable housing complex that is located just one block from the intersection, has further increased the need to install these sidewalks to enable the safety and walkability of the community. The Village is seeking \$500,000 in state funds to construct sections of sidewalks alongside the two state-owned roadways where they do not currently exist.

Harmon Fire House New Roof. The Harmon Fire House, a building central to the Village's volunteer fire operations and Croton Emergency Medical Services, currently operates with a roof that has neared its intended operable lifespan. The building houses a total of two of the Village's Fire Companies and the entirety of the Croton's EMS Department. The village is currently seeking to secure \$500,000 in state funding to replace the roof of this facility as well as to repair ceiling tiles damaged by past leaks.

Collaboration with Railroads. There are a number of issues the Village would like to discuss with Metro North and CSX Railroads ranging from real estate to possible extension

of the bike path beyond the 9/11 Memorial. Croton will seek the assistance of its Assembly and Senate members to convene a meeting of high-level Metro-North and CSX officials to meet with Croton as an ongoing Task Force focused on Village-Railroad collaboration.

Direct Federal Funding for Croton Priority Projects

Direct federal funding to Croton can be made available in a number of ways, including through Community Project Funding (CPF), the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and through various other congressional appropriation and authorization measures.

After a 10-year suspension, Congress resumed the practice in 2021 of including funding for community projects in its annual appropriations bills. Through the leadership of Rep. Mondaire Jones in 2022, Croton received \$1.5 million for reconstruction of the Half Moon Bay Bridge under the CPF category of funding. For the current federal fiscal year, the year-long Continuing Resolution adopted by Congress on March 14th eliminated most congressionally sponsored local projects . It is hoped that they will be available again once Congress begins its effort on its new budget later this year. The Village is already working with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand on a project for relining of the water main on Harrison Street and a new water main on Sunset Trail and plans to work with Rep. Mike Lawler on funding for a new fire engine. We appreciate the opportunity to work with them both on these priorities.

Next Steps

The Village of Croton on Hudson is grateful for the opportunity to forward these legislative, program and project priorities and thanks you for your time in reviewing them. We look forward to working with you to achieve progress on all of these areas in the year ahead.

Please contact Village Manager Bryan Healy at bhealy@crotononhudson-ny.gov or 914-271-4848 with any questions or suggestions.