



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 26, 2026

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin Secures Key Buffer Zone Protections for Houses of Worship and the Jewish Community in State Budget Negotiations

Albany, NY — **Assemblywoman Amy Paulin** played a leading role in successfully negotiating critical protections for houses of worship, and Jewish institutions such as religious schools and community centers, as part of the New York State budget bill passed today (Part QQ of A.10008-C/S.9008-C).

Following intense negotiations surrounding Governor Hochul’s proposed “buffer zone” legislation, Assemblywoman Paulin worked closely with fellow legislators, including Assemblymembers Simcha Eichenstein and Micah Lasher, to craft language that both enhances public safety and withstands constitutional scrutiny.

The final agreement represents a major victory for the Jewish community and other faith-based institutions that have faced an alarming rise in harassment, intimidation, and antisemitic incidents in recent years.

“As antisemitism and hate crimes continue to rise across our state and nation, it is essential that our houses of worship, religious schools, and community institutions have meaningful protections,” **said Assemblywoman Paulin**. “I was proud to play a role in the negotiations to ensure that the final language in the budget protects vulnerable communities while respecting constitutional rights.”

Throughout the negotiations, the Assembly was focused on ensuring that the legislation would provide real-world protections for Jewish institutions that have increasingly become targets of intimidation and harassment.

One of the most significant accomplishments secured during negotiations was an expanded definition of “religious place of worship.” Under the final agreement, protections will explicitly extend not only to traditional houses of worship, but also to Jewish community centers, yeshivas, and religious schools.

In addition, the new law encompasses perimeters including entrances, exits, sidewalks, driveways and parking lots around vulnerable institutions, strengthening security and enforcement capabilities.

“I thank Governor Hochul for leading the way on and being a champion for this issue,” **said Paulin**. “Speaker Heastie also has my sincerest thanks for standing with the Jewish members of the Assembly and the broader Jewish community in support of these protections for Jewish New Yorkers.”

The final legislation builds upon existing New York law, which has already been upheld and tested in court, that creates criminal penalties for harassment outside religious institutions and reproductive health centers. The updated penal law Section 240.69 adds new protections by creating a criminal penalty for individuals who, “with respect to an individual who was or is seeking to enter into or exit from a place of religious worship ... within fifty feet from a place of religious worship, knowingly or intentionally

engages in a course of conduct that places that individual in reasonable fear for their safety.”

“Families, students, and worshippers deserve to feel safe when attending synagogue, school, or community events,” **Paulin said**. “At a time when the Jewish community has been under sustained attack, this legislation is a tremendous win and sends a clear message that New York stands against hate and intimidation.”



Jewish leaders have applauded the new legislation.

Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President, Union for Reform Judaism, said, “Amid the unprecedented rise of antisemitism, Assemblymember Paulin has provided vital leadership to keep our community safer. We appreciate her commitment to ensuring Jews can gather, worship, and live fully, openly, and without fear.”

Michael Mittelman, President, Westchester Jewish Council, said, “We want to thank Assemblywoman Amy Paulin for her leadership as well as her fellow NYS Assemblymembers for this important legislation that will provide critical protections to Jewish houses of worship, learning and gathering that have become targets of unprecedented levels of hate. The protections in this bill, accompanied by the work of law enforcement, send a clear message that hate will not be tolerated and that the safety of our communities remains a priority.”

Daniel Rosenthal, Vice President, Government & External Relations, UJA-Federation of New York, said "We commend Governor Hochul, Assemblymember Paulin and the state legislature for taking decisive action to protect New Yorkers by passing 'buffer zone' legislation, ensuring that safety and security remain paramount across our communities. This legislation will protect New Yorkers from intimidation and harassment while maintaining safe access to critical community institutions. UJA-Federation of New York will continue to advocate for policies that protect and safeguard New York's Jewish community."

Jonathan E. Blake, Senior Rabbi, Westchester Reform Temple, said, "New York's Jews, and those who worship, celebrate, mourn, and learn with us in our synagogues and community institutions, deserve to know that they can do so safe from threat or harm. This legislation will ensure that essential measure."

Elise Dowell, CEO, JCC Mid-Westchester, said, "Our entire community is deeply grateful for Assemblywoman Paulin's leadership in securing the Buffer Zone legislation to ensure protection and safety for those who simply wish to enter and exit religious institutions and community centers. Assemblywoman Paulin's dedication and commitment to advocating for and passing legislation that supports our community is inspiring and appreciated -- not just by her constituents, but by all New Yorkers. Our local and state officials who championed these efforts offer all of us hope that New York will continue to be a place where the Jewish community can feel shielded from threats of violence and intimidation."

Rabbi Jonathan Morgenstern, Young Israel of Scarsdale, said, "Once again, Assemblywoman Amy Paulin has proven herself to be a steadfast advocate of Jewish New Yorkers and Jewish people everywhere, putting forward common sense legislation that protects freedom and access to worship during this troubling time of rising antisemitic and anti-Israel violence and rhetoric. Jews, and people of all faiths and ethnicities, have the constitutional right to worship, study and pray as we please, without fear of harassment and intimidation."

Rabbi Jesse Gallop, Temple Israel of New Rochelle, said, "Creating safe buffer zones around houses of worship protects our community, especially our children, from hate and antisemitism. Synagogues, temples, mosques and churches should be places of love, tolerance and acceptance, teaching values that improve our world, not grounds for protest and aggressive behavior. All people should be able to worship in peace and safety."

Rabbi Lester Bronstein, Rabbi Emeritus Bet Am Shalom Synagogue, said, "Over many years, Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (my assemblywoman!) has conducted herself as a staunch civil libertarian, lifting up the rights and wellbeing of everyone in our midst. Once again she has proven that we can have laws that protect both worshipers and students and all Americans who want to raise their voices in legal protest. We can indeed live together here! Our Jewish community is immensely grateful and indebted to Assemblywoman Paulin, as should be all who love our country and its freedoms. This elegantly crafted ruling shields us from intimidation, even as it strengthens the moral voice of the Constitution for the benefit of all Americans."

Rabbi Reuven Fink, Young Israel of New Rochelle, said, "This is a great boon for Jewish institutions who have heretofore felt besieged by hate mongers and antisemitism. We thank Amy Paulin for all her amazing leadership!"

Rabbi Chaim Marder, Hebrew Institute of White Plains, said, "At a time of rising anti-semitism, the Jewish community is on edge. In the more recent period, groups of agitators with hate-filled and dangerous messaging have threatened the safety and wellbeing of our synagogues and religious institutions. We are deeply appreciative of Assemblywoman Amy Paulin for her role in helping advance legislation which will keep such groups from menacing and threatening our community members seeking to access our sacred spaces."

Rabbi Adam Baldachin, Shaarei Tikvah Synagogue, said, "As rabbi of Shaarei Tikvah, a synagogue in Scarsdale, I am so grateful for this legislation that will help protect

Jews during a time of rising antisemitism. Assemblywoman Paulin's dedicated efforts will result in a lawful way of protecting our community.”

Rabbi David A. Schuck, Beth El Synagogue Center, New Rochelle, said, “Houses of worship must remain places of prayer, learning, community, and refuge. At a time when Jewish institutions and other faith communities face rising threats, harassment, and intimidation, this legislation offers a necessary and carefully balanced protection. It protects worshippers, students, families, and faith communities from intimidation while preserving the constitutional right to speak, protest, and express dissent. In a free society, both commitments are essential. This bill defends free speech without allowing harassment to become the price of entering a house of worship.”

Rabbi Dani Rockoff, Head of School, Westchester Day School, said, “Jewish schools and houses of worship should always be places of learning, prayer, community, and hope — never places where families fear harassment or intimidation. At a moment of rising antisemitism, this legislation provides meaningful protections and reassurance for our community. We are grateful to Assemblywoman Amy Paulin and all those who helped advance this important effort on behalf of vulnerable faith communities throughout New York.”

Deganit Ronen, Head of School, Westchester Torah Academy, said, “This legislation is a critical and long-overdue step toward protecting Jewish students, educators, families, and community members across New York. At a time when Jewish institutions continue to face rising threats and intimidation, we are deeply grateful for Assemblymember Paulin’s tireless advocacy and commitment to the safety and dignity of Jewish New Yorkers.”

Rabbi Sruli Deitsch, Chabad of Bronxville, Eastchester and Tuckahoe, said, “I feel that this legislation provides our community with a vital layer of peace of mind. knowing that there is a legal safeguard to protect our children at school and our families at prayer from harassment. It will give us peace of mind when gathering,

learning, and celebrating Judaism. We are incredibly grateful for this meaningful protection."

Paid for by Friends of Amy Paulin

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