

NYS Governor Hochul Delivers Remarks at JCRC - Jewish Community Relations Council of New York Board Meeting

Governor Hochul: "As Governor of the State of New York, I can not neglect any community or any issue that comes to my attention. That is my moral responsibility. That is my philosophy of government. We're going to continue building on what we've done in the past, but recognizing that all communities are facing unique challenges right now."

Governor Kathy Hochul delivered remarks on Wednesday, November 10th at the Jewish Community Relations Council Of New York board meeting.

A transcript of her speech is below:

Governor Hochul: Gideon, thank you. First of all for your leadership with this extraordinary organization and Cheryl Fishbein, your CEO and Noam Gilboord, the COO, and Rabbi Michael Miller, who I've worked with for many years as Lieutenant Governor. And I want to thank you for the work that you're doing to build those bridges, build those relationships, which are so critically important. And I want to make sure that you know the depth of my commitment to the Jewish community, we have many challenges. And I've spoken at countless events, not just now, but as a member of Congress in support of the deep Jewish community, because for so long the community has been under assault. And we talked about the rise in hate crimes against individuals who should never have that fear in their hearts. I visited a number of the Yeshivas recently, and this is at a time when there were more attacks going on in the streets and people are feeling anxious. A young boy said to me, "I was told I shouldn't wear my yarmulke because that means I'm going to be a target of someone could attack me, what do you think I should do?" I said, "Young man, wear that proudly. This is a sign of the strength and the resilience. That is part of your DNA. You've always fought back." And Jewish people have always had to fight back, but it makes them stronger and more united together. So I'm conscious of what is going on, very much so, working very hard to make sure that the resources are there from the state government to fund security programs, to continue to attack the crimes where they occur.

So I just wanted to say that at the outset that anyone on this call who is aware of a situation, who feels under siege, feels under attack, who thinks we can do better to provide security measures, please let me know so I can move that to a very important priority of my administration, working with our state police and our task force. We know that today is the 83rd anniversary of Kristallnacht, and the images that go through our minds of what happened on that night are part of what I'm talking about. The resiliency of the people to stand up to oppression and fight back. And we think about the Ethics of the Fathers that says, there's a verse from



New York State Governor, Kathy Hochul.

Photo: YouTube generated.

that: 'it is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.' As governor of the State of New York, I can not neglect any community or any issue that comes to my attention. That is my moral responsibility. That is my philosophy of government. We're going to continue building on what we've done in the past, but recognizing that all communities are facing unique challenges right now.

I have to say this, the pandemic was so incredibly brutal for many communities, many individuals and yes, the loss of life. Yes, the loss of employment, it was devastating. But everybody had the sense at some point it's going to end. But we also felt that the human condition is very fragile. Many people succumb to suicide or substance abuse or domestic violence. All of those indicators of stress on human beings are off the charts. So in addition to finding ways I can work to rebuild the city, the state of New York, to get people back downtown, to bring back the livelihoods of so many people that were lost because of the pandemic. We also have to pay attention to what happened to the human spirit. And I want to let you know that we can work together on this front, not just combating antisemitic crimes. As we know, the NYPD reported many, many crimes in this area, unconsciously so. But also what we can do as leaders of the

community to help lift people up who've fallen so far. So we also are going to working closely with its members to community, to identify areas where they see the needs for social services, they see the need for individuals who are are hurting, and also ensure whatever happens, that we will stand united with the people of the Jewish community. And we are brothers and sisters, and we are our brother's keepers, our sister's keepers. And that is my approach to how we will work together.

So the importance of the work that you're doing, and that's why I'm talking about my values, because we are aligned here. You're talking about promoting equality and civil rights offered Jewish and other racial, religious, ethnic groups. That is so important. That is what separates New York state. Not just some other states, but from any place in the world. That Statue of Liberty stands in our Harbor. That is the sign that you come here, wherever you are oppressed, we will welcome you. We will embrace you and we'll make you part of the family. And unfortunately, many people do not feel that. There are forces trying to say that is not who we are anymore. And I reject that notion. I reject it to my very core. And that is why we're going to continue work together. Our faith community, helping us lead the way to a place where people feel valued,

respected. And we're not there just yet. I don't have all the answers, but I have a lot of questions and I'm going to make sure that we deepen our relationships.

I just want to recognize the role that the faith community play, that our leaders play, as well as working in synergy, in concert with elected leaders like myself, and one thing we need to do, which I so appreciate everyone who's done this already, but the vaccinations are the path we need to take to get out of this. More people need to be vaccinated. There are communities where people are rejecting the notion that this is healthy for them, that this is a good thing to do. We have to stand up against the forces of disinformation, the lies that are out there. We have to make sure more people are vaccinated. And now we have the opportunity. So little kids in school can finally be free of having to wear masks, which has protected them in the past, help protect their parents and their grandparents. But in order to get off of that, to get off to a better place, to finally say once for all the masks are over, we need to get our kids vaccinated. So I'm calling on all of you as leaders to help us get the message out there, help find ways we can bring these vaccinations easily into various communities. So one thing I've done just in case you're interested, I know a lot of you who have children and grandchildren, any child who gets vaccinated can enter a lottery. And we literally are going to give away 50 full scholarships to a SUNY or CUNY institution.

We value their education. This is out of reach for far too many, but if we can just use this as an additional incentive, get the word out, help me out with this. So we're also going to be hosting more round tables with our faith communities and making sure that they know how important I view their role and being the trusted voices, the trusted voices that have not been there as people get information from Facebook and other crazy places. You are the ones they trust. You're the ones they believe in. And I'm calling on everyone to help us step, step up, to help, help get this information.

So our department of health is continuing to focus on this, and I want to tell you, I appreciate in advance all the work you can do on this. Basically my philosophy for just one more wrap up, I believe that the State of New York has a tremendous opportunity to inspire people's faith again. For too long, whether it's the federal government or what people have had to see go on here in the State of New York for a number of months over the last year, they've lost their faith. They don't believe anymore. They believe that everyone's in it for their own self-interest. And I've been in this business a very long time, starting as an Assembly intern back when I was in college. So I've been a student of politics my whole life working to elect Senator Moynihan to his first position a long

“Gov. Hochul: This goes back decades. My commitment to the Jewish community has been strong. I grew up in a social-activist Catholic family. So we did a lot of interfaith initiatives in terms of fighting for social justice. So we worked closely with the Jewish community where I grew up. So those alliances have been there a long time. But as a member of Congress, a decade ago, I stood firm with Israel when they were under assault and even more recently as a Democrat now. I reject the individuals in my party who are making this an issue and questioning our commitment to Israel. I said this again on a stage, I think, lastly the night before that no one will ever question our strong commitment to Israel.”

time ago.

So I understand the power, the potential of government when it's harnessed in a positive way. I need to show the people of this state tangible results, building back our cities, making sure that we have infrastructure, making sure we spend the money that's coming out of the federal government. Joe Biden and the Democrats delivered a great deal of money to the State of New York and infrastructure. We hope that there's more money coming in the form of human capital, the services that are needed to help people who are struggling right now. But in the meantime, that money is critically important for the major infrastructure projects that have gone un-dealt with for too long. Places like Penn Station. I declared that that was a hellacious place. No one should ever go to Penn Station and I'm going to rebuild it. They can share - we have the Long Island Railroad and other places, all working efficiently. Finishing up GMT, finishing up LaGuardia. So I'm very excited about using the dollars that have come to the State of New York, making sure that they're put to good use and just letting everyone in New York State know that yes, we've been beaten down. It was a brutal 20 months, no doubt about it, but I want to make sure that we're addressing quality of life issues. That is safety. That is security. That is people's sense of wellbeing. And that took a beating during this pandemic. And I'm working very hard to find ways to restore that, restore people's confidence in their lives as New Yorkers and in their government and I call on all of you to be my allies in that journey. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to address your board this evening.

Gideon Taylor: Thank you so much, Governor. We really, we so appreciate this and I think I just wanted to acknowledge we have here today Marissa Shorenstein, also her mother Janice, and Marissa obviously head of the transition and Janice is - Marissa is a board member and Janice former president of the organization.

And you have many, many other friends I know before you came. Many, many people have talked very fondly about the connection they have had with you and we look forward to continuing that in your, your new role. If you have a minute, just a couple of questions have come in. If you, if you have a have a minute, that would be great.

Governor Hochul: Yes I do.

Gideon Taylor: Great. Terrific. So, we so appreciate the issue that your engagement on so many issues that affect not only our Jewish community, but our wider New York community, and obviously on everyone's minds at the moment is climate change. And we sort of very, people are interested to hear what your thoughts are, how you see that issue at a broader perspective for New

York. Also we have a specific question regarding the provision in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, which is a program known as NYSEDA that provides federal grants to nonprofits for energy upgrades and currently funds energy audits and other services for public and non-public schools.

And we were hoping that you might support the expansion of that to other nonprofits. We think it's a very important step. But really your, your commitment on, on engagement and climate change is just of such importance to us. And we're just interested to hear what your thoughts are on that.

Governor Hochul: Right. And I'll say the last part of your question first, Gideon. The issue that you raised is something I've already spoken to my team about, to talk about how we could find a path to expand what NYSEDA does to help develop energy efficiencies with state money. And also, just to be protecting the environment and transition to making that available for not for profits as well.

So, that is very much on our radar screen, but my overall commitment to climate change, fighting climate change, is unparalleled. But I found in my first days as governor, literally within 10 days, I had to deal with not one but two hurricanes, New York had more hurricanes than the entire state of Florida this past year. And we have to recognize, and I said this on my 11th day in office, I have to be prepared and our state has to be prepared for the fact that this could happen every couple of weeks, you know, certainly every year. And we were not prepared.

What I did see was that the work we had done after Superstorm Sandy, building the resiliency on the coastal areas, long Island, that held, that was proof that those investments made sense and they work.

But what we were not prepared before was the record-setting onslaught of rain from the sky that flooded people and literally took the lives of many New Yorkers, particularly in East Elmhurst, Queens, took their lives as they drowned in their homes, to lower level homes, that they lived in that should not have been living in, but they have no other alternatives.

So seeing those images, walking through those streets, seeing the pain and devastation that was so rampant and so hurtful to see, I've resolved that under my watch as Governor, no one will be able to match our commitment and what we're going to do. And literally, the next couple of weeks, during climate week, I announced Number one, that there is already a \$3 billion Bond Act that was going to the voters next year. I said we'll increase that to \$4 billion. \$3 billion will not get us where we need to go in terms of having the resources necessary, and renamed it, the Clean Water, Clean Air

and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act because there are thousands of jobs associated with this, whether it's wind, solar, offshore wind, particularly off the coast of Long Island, as well as bringing transmission lines to the city to bring hydroelectric power.

So again, within two weeks, I announced a major commitment to the transmission lines to bring in wind, solar and hydro into the city of New York to help replace the polluting fossil-fuel driven plants, the Peaker plants, and in places are causing asthma for kids who are getting too sick. So that's happening.

We're also having for the first time ever in the country the Community Monitoring Systems so we can be keeping an eye on what the levels are in neighborhoods so children are not getting sick.

Also, a nearly \$60 million green schools initiative to bring in money for the various schools. So we're hitting this on many areas, but my commitment is unparalleled.

Just as a way of background, I grew up in a place called Buffalo, actually Lackawanna, steel plants, pollution. What I experienced as a child, I didn't even know the sky was supposed to be blue. All we saw was this cloud of orange. It's amazing that we still have our health today. Everybody grew up with this and we would watch at night the shores of one of the great lakes, one of the largest freshwater lakes on this planet, being visibly polluted by this lava-looking substance that went in the lake every night.

So environmental issues are very important to me. I saw how it devastated a community, but also now we know the long-term effect, not just air pollution and water pollution, but the effect on our climate. We talked about when I was younger, we're living with it now. This is not a threat of the future. It is occurring right now. So I know that the state of New York has a lot of power to do something about this, and we're going to lead the nation in terms of our commitment and what we're going to do financially.

Gideon Taylor: Great. Thank you. So if we've time for one more question, so obviously Israel is just such a deep concern for all of us in New York, Jews, non-Jews, and there's been such a historic relationship between the state of New York and the state of Israel. I know you've expressed interest in going for a visit soon and maybe you can just share with us a little bit of your thoughts on that connection and that relationship and how you see that.

Governor Hochul: This goes back decades. My commitment to the Jewish community has been strong. I grew up in a social-activist Catholic family. So we did a lot of interfaith initiatives in terms of fighting for social justice. So we worked closely with the Jewish community where I grew up. So those

alliances have been there a long time.

But as a member of Congress, a decade ago, I stood firm with Israel when they were under assault and even more recently as a Democrat now. I reject the individuals in my party who are making this an issue and questioning our commitment to Israel. I said this again on a stage, I think, lastly the night before that no one will ever question our commitment to Israel.

We also have opportunities to do much more in trade and in research and development and find more partnerships and relationships so we can innovate the new technologies, but also in healthcare. There's a lot of things happening in Israel that we need to take advantage of and bring our experts together. I look forward to leading a trade mission as we get through a couple of hurdles over the next year, which I plan to do. And once that is accomplished, I look forward to the future. I did say in a speech a couple of nights ago, my family had planned the trip this Thanksgiving to go to Israel, our children, their spouses, and we were looking forward to this a long time, and all of a sudden, late August, my life changed rather dramatically. And so I say to the family if we can just postpone this one more year, let me get through this year and I'll be there next year. So my father, my 85 year old father, went there last year. And, it was a struggle for him to make that journey, but it was so deeply personal to him that he accomplished that, and when he came back, he was, I believe he was changed. I want to have that same experience and I'm looking forward to it very much.

Gideon Taylor: Well, that's wonderful. And you have many friends, I'm sure, here and in Israel who will really look forward to that a chance to engage and to be with you in Israel. So let me take this opportunity just to turn it over to Cheryl Fishbein, president of JCRC. Cheryl?

Cheryl Fishbein: Governor, we are so proud and thank you for joining us. And on behalf of the entire JCRC, we do want to thank you again and again for being here with us and making our board meeting your first public address to the New York Jewish community. And we are immeasurably grateful for your commitment to working with us, with JCRC, with the New York Jewish community and with Jewish communities throughout the state. We stand ready to assist you in fighting hate across all communities, not only Jewish communities. And I do remember marching across the Brooklyn Bridge with you, right next to you, during our major march where there were 30,000 people together walking across and we will continue to do that and we will continue to work with you to improve our city and to improve our state for all New Yorkers. So thank you again.

Governor Hochul: Thank you, Cheryl. I appreciate that. And we'll be working very closely together. Thank you again.