



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey Priorities Included in Senate One-House Budget Proposal

MICHELLE HINCHEY March 13, 2024



ALBANY, NY – Senator Michelle Hinchey today announced that numerous initiatives she created and championed are included in the [Senate One-House Budget Resolution](#), which would benefit Hudson Valley communities.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “Our Senate one-house delivers on the priorities important to our district. I’m proud that we’re offering a budget that brings significant dollars back to the 41st district through infrastructure improvements, investments in universal school meals, boosted funding for our public schools, and new property tax relief for middle-class

homeowners; one that recognizes housing as a human right and brings a multi-pronged approach to increase affordable housing supply in rural and upstate communities along with my bill to create New York's first-ever Short-Term Rental Registry. We've put a stake in the ground to show that we are serious about ending the public transportation desert that is the Mid-Hudson Valley, signifying a path to realize our vision for a Mid-Hudson Valley Transportation Authority. This budget is one that takes big, nation-leading action in the face of the global Climate Crisis while also bringing the fight locally, from making polluters pay to advancing resiliency projects – like replacing the crumbling Rondout Creek Bulkhead – to establishing the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program and incentivizing smart solar development. We've outlined a vision for New York that prioritizes needed community investments, and I'll be fighting for our proposals to survive three-way budget negotiations.”

What is the Senate One-House Budget?

One-house budgets are proposals developed and put forward independently by both the State Senate and Assembly in response to the [Governor's Executive Budget](#), which was released on January 16th.

What Happens Next?

The budget proposals from the Governor, Senate, and Assembly are used to guide negotiations that take place between the three parties. This phase will determine whether the initiatives put forth by Senator Hinchey and her colleagues are agreed upon, subject to amendments, or potentially omitted entirely. Throughout March, Senator Hinchey will advocate for the inclusion of her proposals in the final State Budget due by the April 1st, 2024, deadline.

Hinchey priorities that made it into the Senate's one-house budget proposal include:

Replacing the Rondout Creek Bulkhead and Shoreline — \$6 Million

The Senate one-house includes Senator Hinchey's proposal to help reconstruct a portion of the 900 feet of bulkhead and restore 500 feet of soft shoreline on the Kingston Rondout Waterfront. The bulkhead is currently in danger of crumbling, threatening extreme flooding, the ruin of several historic structures and the Hudson River Maritime Museum. This initiative is a vital component of the City of Kingston's Waterfront Resiliency Project, and the investment proposed by Hinchey would help address flooding hazards, protect important facilities, and increase public waterfront access.

SUNY New Paltz Impact Aid — \$300,000

The Senate's proposal includes \$300,000 advocated for by Senator Hinchey for SUNY Impact Aid, which would provide financial relief to Village of New Paltz residents from the costs of meeting the safety needs of SUNY students.

Tax Support for Kingston and Ulster's Sojourner Truth State Park and Lloyd's Franny Reese State Park

The Senate's proposal includes a plan championed by Senator Hinchey to provide tax payments to Kingston and the Town of Ulster, designated as NYS Park Host Communities for Sojourner Truth State Park, and the Town of Lloyd, likewise designated as a NYS Park Host Community for Franny Reese State Park. Hinchey's proposal would protect local residents from facing economic repercussions because of the tax-exempt status of the parklands, totaling over 500 acres for Sojourner Truth State Park and over 200 acres for Franny Reese State Park, aligning them with the standards established for other State Park Host Communities.

Capping the Town of New Lebanon Landfill — \$2.25 Million

The Senate's plan includes a proposal by Senator Hinchey to cap a landfill in the Town of New Lebanon that poses potential health and environmental hazards with active PFAS. The landfill was approved for closure in 2009 by the Department of Environmental Conservation; however, due to chronic underfunding of the state program responsible for closing the landfill, New Lebanon has waited decades to secure its closure. Urgent funding is needed to avert a potential tax increase on the small municipality of 2,514 residents, and Senator Hinchey is proposing \$2.25 million in the budget to ensure local residents don't bear the brunt of closing costs.

Plattekill Culvert Replacement — Up to \$500,000

The Town of Plattekill needs emergency funds to replace a deteriorated culvert, which will not survive the 1.5 years it would take for the Town to apply for grant funding through the DOT. Senator Hinchey is championing capital funding to help Plattekill make this emergency infrastructure replacement.

The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz — \$150,000

As the representative of SUNY New Paltz, Senator Hinchey has proposed \$150,000, which is included in the Senate one-house budget, to support the Benjamin Center's Science Lab Initiative (SLI). The SLI supports the creation of science and technology labs in school districts across the mid-Hudson region and at SUNY New Paltz, with the goal of increasing student interest in science and promoting STEM education.

Getting Equity for Belleayre Mountain Ski Center — \$15 Million

The Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) funds and maintains the state-owned Belleayre Mountain Ski Center alongside the Olympic Parks in the Adirondacks. Belleayre has been significantly left behind in terms of capital funding over the last several years

despite the high levels of in-state tourism it sees as one of the mountains closest to New York City. This year, thanks to Senator Hinchey's advocacy, the Senate is proposing \$15 million to support capital and operational funding for Belleayre.

Metro-North Hudson Line Resiliency — \$20 Million

The Senate's plan includes \$20 million in resiliency funding championed by Senator Hinchey to fortify Metro-North's Hudson Line against the escalating threats of extreme weather. Recent flash flooding and mudslides over the summer temporarily suspended service along the Hudson Line, underlining the urgent need for resiliency funding to safeguard the commuter network and other local infrastructure.

Public Utility Law Project — \$2.25 Million

New York's Public Utility Law Project (PULP) is a nonprofit law firm that fights for the rights of fixed-income utility customers. In the Hudson Valley, several utility providers have operated in bad faith, resulting in financial hardships and poor service to our residents. The demand for PULP's assistance has surged in recent years, surpassing their current staff capacity. Recognizing this need, Senator Hinchey is proposing a funding allocation of \$2.25 million to help PULP expand its team. This investment will ensure PULP can meet the growing demand for services and continue providing essential support to our residents who rely on their expertise and advocacy.

Local Journalism Payroll Tax Credit — \$20 Million

The Senate one-house includes a proposal supported by Senator Hinchey to create a payroll tax credit to help small, independently owned newspapers and digital publications (with 100 or fewer employees) hire local journalists. The suggested tax credit is up to \$12,500 per employed journalist, with a maximum of \$200,000 per employer and an annual cap of \$20

million statewide.

Senator Hinchey and her colleagues rejected all proposed cuts to education funding in the Executive Budget and reinstated the “hold harmless” provision, which has historically ensured school districts never received less funding than the year before. The Senate proposes \$747 million in total school aid, providing a minimum 3% increase for all school districts. The Senate one-house also proposes to fund a comprehensive study of the Foundation Aid formula to help reassess how New York funds its public schools.

Middle-Class Property Tax Relief

Senator Hinchey and her colleagues included a proposal to extend the real property tax relief credit for middle-class homeowners for three years through tax year 2026 and increase eligibility to lower the tax burden for more New Yorkers.

Working Family Tax Credit

The Senate advances language to create a Working Families Tax Credit that would provide a \$550 credit per child to single taxpayers making less than \$75,000 and married taxpayers filing jointly making under \$130,000.

Ensuring Millionaires and Billionaires Pay Their Fair Share

The Senate proposes to increase personal income taxes on individuals earning more than \$5 million annually (a 10.3 to 10.8% increase) and individuals making over \$25 million who would see rate increases from 10.9% to 11.4%. The Senate one-house also eliminates an outdated sales tax exemption for yachts costing above \$230,000 and for private aircraft, raising needed revenue for community investments.

Senator Hinchey believes the Mid-Hudson Valley needs a transportation authority to address the region's current lack of dedicated public transportation. Without a central provider, individual counties shoulder the burden of transportation needs, often leading to route cuts due to budget constraints, affecting the few but vital existing connections to essential facilities like healthcare and grocery stores. The absence of a transportation authority also hampers the Mid-Hudson Valley's access to state and federal funds, which are critical for expanding public transportation networks. This absence leaves valuable resources untapped, which could otherwise benefit local communities.

As a first step to underscore the immense need for an authority and its potential impact, Senator Hinchey has proposed in the Senate one-house a comprehensive study to identify service gaps, assess the resources needed for a transportation authority, and outline funding requirements for effective operation.

The support demonstrated in the one-house puts a stake in the ground to show that a Mid-Hudson Valley Transportation Authority is not just a possibility, it's a necessity. Senator Hinchey is committed to bringing all stakeholders to the table and finding a path forward to ensure access to safe, reliable, and accessible public transportation for all Mid-Hudson Valley residents.

In last year's State Budget, Senator Hinchey championed a historic expansion of Healthy School Meals. As a result, more than 347,000 students in 1,200 schools statewide gained access to free school meals starting this school year, including about 83% of students in the 41st District. However, hundreds of thousands of students were left out of that expansion, with over 321,000 students in 650 schools still left behind.

Senator Hinchey is leading the charge to call for the state to close the gap and deliver a permanent, universal program. The Senate's plan would fully fund a statewide universal Healthy School Meals program for all New York students.

Communities statewide, including across the 41st District, are confronting a severe shortage of affordable housing, further strained by the surge in short-term rentals. The proliferation of short-term units is driving up rents, removing needed housing, and playing a role in displacing long-term residents.

In light of this crisis, the Senate's plan includes a proposal from Senator Hinchey to create a [Short-Term Rental \(STR\) Registry](#) to provide more transparency within this hospitality sector and provide communities with the information and revenue needed to right-size their local STR market where needed.

The Senate's proposal incorporates a housing package created by Senator Hinchey with nearly \$500 million dedicated to funding high-demand and oversubscribed housing programs while expanding affordable rental and homeowner units in rural and upstate areas:

Small Rental Development Initiative — \$12 Million

The Small Rental Development Initiative funds housing developments of 20 units or less and single-family housing in rural areas. Funding would be awarded to local nonprofit housing organizations and authorities to develop and manage small rental development housing throughout New York State to meet the needs of rural communities. Smaller-scale

developments often lose out to larger developments, which are more likely to receive state and federal subsidies. 2022 was the first time in five years that funding was available through the program.

Community Land Trust Acquisition Fund — \$50 Million

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) rehabilitate old buildings and transition them to long-term affordable homes. A revolving acquisition fund would allow CLTs to acquire and flip zombie properties across the state and create more long-term affordable housing.

Affordable Housing Corporation — \$4.2 Million

The New York State Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC) creates homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income families by providing down payment and closing cost assistance and grants to governmental, not-for-profit, and charitable organizations to help subsidize the cost of newly constructed houses and the renovation of existing housing.

Rural Preservation Program — \$7.75 Million

The Rural Preservation Program supports community-based not-for-profit corporations known as Rural Preservation Companies (RPCs), which are the main conduit for implementing the state's rural housing initiatives, including mobile and manufactured home replacement, accessibility modifications, septic and well upgrades, and weatherization assistance.

Residential Emergency Services to Offer Home Repairs to the Elderly (RESTORE) — \$8.4 Million

The New York RESTORE program funds emergency home repairs for low-to-moderate

income seniors, including structural, electrical, plumbing, heating, and appliance replacements. Due to high demand, the program is vastly oversubscribed, and Senator Hinchey is proposing \$7 million over the Executive Budget.

ACCESS to HOME — \$4 Million

The ACCESS to Home Program helps senior citizen homeowners and people with disabilities with the costs of accessibility modifications, including grab bars and wheelchair ramps, so they can continue living safely and independently. This program is also oversubscribed, and funding has not been increased since 2012. Senator Hinchey is proposing a \$1 million increase in program funding for a total of \$4 million.

Housing Access Voucher Program — \$250 Million

The Housing Access Voucher Program provides rental assistance in the form of vouchers to individuals who are homeless or facing imminent risk of becoming homeless.

Tenant Protections

The Senate's plan supports advancing tenant protections that align with the core principles of Good Cause Eviction legislation, which would help protect tenants across the state against unjust evictions and excessive rate hikes.

Rural Rental Assistance Program — \$23 Million

The Rural Rental Assistance Program provides payments to owners of USDA-financed Rural Rental Housing on behalf of low-income tenants unable to pay their full rent. Increasing funding for this program will help expand eligibility for rental subsidies to non-USDA housing and housing developments that don't currently receive state funding.

Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) — \$40 Million

The Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) is administered by the NYS Office of the Attorney General and provides funding to non-profit housing counseling and legal services organizations that provide direct assistance to homeowners in default and foreclosure. HOPP ensures housing counseling and legal services are available to homeowners in every county of New York State and provides a range of services to help stabilize homeownership, including financial counseling, negotiating loan modification and other workout options with mortgage servicers, redressing deed theft and mortgage fraud scams, assisting homeowners facing tax foreclosures, and helping families find alternative housing.

Incentive Program for Accessory Dwelling Units

The Senate proposes an optional incentive program for municipalities to legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs), a tax exemption to help homeowners who want to create accessory dwelling units, and state-level financing support.

USDA 515 Rental Property Preservation — \$25 Million

USDA 515 projects are affordable rental properties built with USDA funding in rural areas of the state in the 1990s and early 2000s. The 30-year mortgages on these properties are expiring, along with their affordability protections. There are approximately 400 properties encompassing 22,000 affordable rental apartments in New York, and Senator Hinchey is advocating that the state invest in preserving and rehabbing these properties, like the Mitchell-Lama Program in urban areas.

Farm Worker Housing Revolving Loan Program — \$15 Million

This revolving loan program helps improve existing housing or construct new housing for farmworkers. It is critical to assisting farmers in providing safe, modern workforce housing,

and Senator Hinchey is proposing a new \$15 million to replenish the program.

After creating 803 new pre-K seats and maintaining 2,708 total throughout her Senate District last year, Senator Hinchey is fighting for the expansion of pre-K programming locally for communities in the 41st District. The Senate's plan includes \$150 million for the continued expansion of universal pre-K (UPK) across New York State. Senator Hinchey and her colleagues are also advocating increasing UPK funding reimbursements to schools per pupil, recognizing that existing thresholds do not adequately cover the cost of creating a pre-K seat.

The Senate's plan would also provide \$500 million (a \$220 million increase) to establish a permanent Workforce Retention Grant Program, which would provide childcare employees with an annual salary enhancement and help expand access to childcare. The one-house also advances language to establish differential payment rates from 10-15% for childcare providers who care for children experiencing homelessness, who provide care during nontraditional hours, and other circumstances.

With over two million New Yorkers facing food insecurity, Senator Hinchey is advocating for bolstering safety net programs and state procurement goals to create a more equitable food system that benefits New Yorkers and local farms.

Expanding the 30% NYS Farm-to-School Incentive Program

New York is the only state in the country that excludes breakfast from its farm-to-school program. The Senate's plan includes a [proposal by Senator Hinchey](#) to expand the 30% Farm-to-School Incentive Program to include breakfast foods along with an additional 25-cent

reimbursement per school lunch to help school meal programs continue sourcing food from farmers. This would significantly increase incentives for schools to purchase directly from New York farmers while bringing more nutritious, locally-grown food into school cafeterias.

Nourish New York Expansion — \$75 Million

In 2021, Senator Hinchey authored a law that made Nourish New York a permanent state program, requiring annual funding for ongoing support to food-insecure New Yorkers and local farmers. Nourish New York provides state funding to food banks and other emergency food providers, allowing them to buy agricultural products from local farmers and distribute food to people in need. Given the program's tremendous impact in combating hunger and food insecurity statewide, Senator Hinchey is advocating for a funding boost, proposing a total of \$75 million for the program, which the Senate's plan endorses.

Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) — \$75 Million

The Senate proposes to invest a historic \$75 million in HPNAP, which would help emergency food providers support the demand for hunger relief at a time when food prices have skyrocketed.

Increasing the SNAP Minimum Benefit to \$50 Per Month

At the start of COVID, the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance began issuing SNAP Emergency Allotments to households receiving less than the maximum monthly amount of SNAP benefits, which ended in March 2023. Families saw an average loss of \$151 per month, while some decreased to the minimum benefit of \$23 a month for groceries. The Senate's plan would create a minimum SNAP benefit of \$50 (up from the current federal minimum of \$23) for households receiving an additional monthly state SNAP benefit.

Clean Water Infrastructure — \$600 Million

The Senate proposes to increase funding for clean water to \$600 million, a \$350 million increase over the Executive Budget. This includes restoring \$250 million in proposed cuts and \$100 million for Senator Hinchey's Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP).

Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP) | S4350A-Hinchey — \$100 Million

New York State has some of the oldest and most unsafe water infrastructure in the country, which is causing dangerous and costly breaks for municipalities and residents; however, the money currently allocated for water system upgrades rarely makes its way to small upstate communities. The Senate's plan would fund a [solution developed by Senator Hinchey](#), the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program, which would provide municipalities with a continuous funding stream through the state budget to help communities more efficiently plan for and finance water system replacements and repairs.

Small Water Utility Transparency Act — S1791-Hinchey

A major issue affecting communities across New York State is the quality of water services provided by small, privately owned water companies. Due to limited operating funds, these companies often struggle to meet health and safety standards and provide affordable service. Some prioritize profit over clean water, leading to statewide issues. [In communities like the Hudson Valley](#), residents have dealt with issues like water contamination, frequent breaks, service outages, insufficient boil-water notices, and substantial rate hikes.

The existing regulatory framework for small water companies in New York State allows many to evade their responsibilities as water providers. To deliver more comprehensive oversight, the Senate's plan includes Senator Hinchey's [Small Water Utility Transparency Act](#). The bill would grant expanded auditing authority to key agencies — the Public Service

Commission, Department of Environmental Conservation, and NYS Comptroller's office, ensuring adherence to health and affordability standards and strengthening fines for violations, with full enforcement authority vested in the PSC.

Protecting Private Wells from Toxic PFAS Chemicals

The Senate's plan would direct the Department of Environmental Conservation to create a grant program to help private well owners install treatment technology or hook up to a public water system if they detect toxic PFAS chemicals in their drinking water. The plan also establishes a rebate to help well owners cover the cost of filtration maintenance. Many private well owners with toxic PFAS in their drinking water cannot afford to pay thousands of dollars to install treatment technology or connect to an uncontaminated water system. These two grant and maintenance rebate programs will help relieve some of those costs to support clean water access.

To achieve the goals of the CLCPA and protect New York's farmland, waterways, forests, and lands, New York must incentivize smart solar development that better serves local farms, communities, and the State. Too often, these finite resources are targeted for development, most recently by solar developers. Senator Hinchey is leading the charge in the effort to advance New York's clean energy transition in a way that ensures both a stable local food supply and environmental stewardship.

The Senate's plan incorporates three proposals by Senator Hinchey that would expand upon the Executive Budget's RAPID Act, which aims to facilitate more efficient siting of major renewable energy and transmission facilities while transferring the Office of Renewable

Energy Siting (ORES) from the Department of State to the Department of Public Service (DPS):

- **Agricultural Regional Impact Criteria (S1793C-Hinchey)** would create the first-ever agricultural regional impact criteria for ORES to consider when reviewing solar project applications. This includes a requirement that ORES assess the impacts of a proposed development on prime farmland (soil groups 1-4) and detail how siting will affect New York's regional food economy and overall farmland protection plans in the state.
- **Statewide Solar Project Tracking System (S6404-Hinchey)** directs ORES and the PSC to create a publicly accessible map of all renewable energy projects, both approved and proposed, throughout the application process in the State of New York. This is needed to provide a comprehensive view of New York's progress toward CLCPA goals and identify potential impacts on communities, including overdevelopment and farmland loss.
- **Exempting Farmland from the Build Ready Program (S1416-Hinchey)** stops viable agricultural lands from being considered for development under the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) Build-Ready Program.

Senator Hinchey advocated for several key investments to support stewardship efforts in the Catskill Park, which have been prioritized in the Senate's one-house plan:

Catskill & Adirondack Park Wilderness Protection — \$8 Million

Three years ago, Senator Hinchey introduced a new funding line in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to ensure fair protection for the Catskill Park through shared stewardship funding to support education efforts, improvements, infrastructure maintenance, and general stewardship of the Catskills and Adirondack Parks. The Senate's plan accepts \$8 million for this purpose.

Catskill Center & Catskill Mountainkeeper — \$100,000

At Hinchey's urging, the Senate's plan includes \$50,000 for both the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and Catskill Mountainkeeper to support their stewardship programs.

Codifying the Role of Catskill Park Coordinator within the DEC (S1413-Hinchey)

In 2021, the Senate unanimously approved legislation introduced by Hinchey to establish the first-ever position of Catskill Park Coordinator. Shortly after, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) implemented the position. Senator Hinchey is now advocating to codify the Catskill Park Coordinator role into the Environmental Conservation Law. This legislative move aims to secure the permanence of this vital position within the DEC, emphasizing its significance in addressing natural resource protection, visitor safety, and promoting tourism within the Catskill ecosystem. The Senate's plan includes language to enshrine this bill into law.

Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) — \$425 Million

The State Legislature established the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) in 1993, designating it as a vital funding source for capital projects dedicated to safeguarding New York's environment and addressing the Climate Crisis. The EPF plays a pivotal role in

protecting essential aspects of New York's ecosystem, including drinking water, food supply, air quality, parks, and state lands. Furthermore, it facilitates the implementation of local and statewide programs aimed at reducing pollution, supporting climate change mitigation, and combating invasive species, among other crucial priorities.

New York HEAT Act

The Senate's plan incorporates the NY HEAT Act, which would cap energy bills at 6% of a household's income and align PSC utility regulation with the CLCPA's climate, emissions reduction targets, and equity mandates.

Climate Change Superfund Act

The Senate's plan adds the Climate Change Superfund Act, which would establish a cost recovery program requiring large fossil fuel companies that have contributed significantly to the buildup of greenhouse gas emissions to pay for the environmental damages they've caused, sparing taxpayers from shouldering the burden.

Expanding Incentives for Home-based Renewable Energy

The Senate one-house proposes increasing the maximum tax credits available for solar and geothermal home installation from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

EMS is the frontline of healthcare in rural and medically underserved communities across New York State; however, insufficient funding, workforce shortages, and geographic challenges have forced many providers to close their doors, removing needed care from communities permanently. EMS agencies and professionals have long advocated for essential designation and more sustainable funding. Senate Bill [S4020B](#)-Mayer/Hinche

would deem EMS an essential service in the State of New York and is included as part of the Senate's proposal.

Senator Hinchey and her colleagues have also secured a commitment to advance additional EMS legislation through the regular legislative process, including [Hinchey's bill authorizing new reimbursement](#) for Treatment-In-Place, Non-Hospital Transport, and Telemedicine.

In last year's budget, Senator Hinchey led the creation of a new grant program to help volunteer fire departments across New York State apply for equipment and building upgrades through the State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. The Senate one-house proposes a new \$25 million investment in the grant program to continue support for local fire departments.

New York has one of the lowest hospice utilization rates in the country, highlighting a critical need for enhanced end-of-life care statewide. The Senate's proposal incorporates [Senator Hinchey's bill](#) to establish a new state Office of Hospice and Palliative Care, which would be responsible for expanding access to services and fostering improved communication among the Department of Health (DOH), providers, and the individuals and families they serve.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment for Human Services Workers

The Senate's plan includes a 3.2% cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment to increase wages for human services workers, including mental health workers. The Senate also adds \$190 million to support wage enhancements of \$2,000 for Direct Service Providers (DSPs) making up to

\$75,000.

Increasing Medicaid Reimbursement Rates & Bolstering the State Medicaid Program

New York's Medicaid program is the second largest in the country, and the Senate one-house adds \$1 billion to restore funding for the program, which includes funding for hospitals, nursing homes, and managed long-term care. The Senate also adds \$1.6 billion to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates, proposing a 3% increase across the board. This includes a 10% total rate increase for hospital inpatient and outpatient services and a 9.5% total rate increase for nursing homes, assisted living programs, and hospices.

Fair Pay for Home Care Workers

The Senate proposes increasing wages for home care providers who serve the disabled, injured, and elderly in New York State. To support workers and help New Yorkers live and age in their homes and communities, the Senate proposes establishing a minimum wage specific to the home care sector indexed to 150% of the state minimum wage. The Commissioner of Health would be responsible for setting annual regional minimum hourly base reimbursement rates. These rates, covering expenses such as overtime, transportation, benefits, and more, would be adjusted annually.

Support for Financially Distressed Hospitals

The Senate adds \$600 million for Financially Distressed Hospitals, for a total of \$1.9 billion State-share. The one-house also proposes \$1.5 billion in capital funding for Healthcare Facility Transformation projects.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Food Committee, Senator Hinchey championed significant state funding to support New York farmers in the Senate one-house, continuing the historic record of state investment in this sector over the last few years. Two initiatives within the wider agriculture budget proposal include the following:

Paying Farmers for Forest Management — \$500,000

The Senate one-house includes Senator Hinchey's proposal to pay New York farmers for their climate work to help manage the forests and woodlands on their properties. Hinchey's goal is to ensure forests and woodlands on agricultural land can become a tool to increase carbon sequestration, help New York meet its CLCPA goals, and provide revenue to help farmers afford to stay in farming.

Relief for New York Cannabis Farmers

Many New York cannabis farmers, through no fault of their own, are facing financial ruin because of the delayed rollout of legal dispensaries. Senator Hinchey fought for relief to help growers stay in business and ensure New York can have a locally-grown cannabis industry. The Senate's plan suggests the following \$128 million relief package:

- **Cannabis Farmer Relief Fund — \$40 Million**

This proposed fund would prioritize cannabis cultivators experiencing hardships due to the delayed roll-out of retail licenses, such as those who have defaulted on loans or leveraged personal assets, like home mortgages, to enter the industry.

- **One-Time Refundable Tax Credit — \$28 Million**

A proposed \$28 million refundable tax credit aims to offer immediate cash relief for cultivators. This credit, applicable against 2022 and 2023 taxes, provides \$50,000 per tax year, with a maximum of \$100,000 per cultivator.

- **Conditional Cultivator License Loan Program — \$60 Million**

The proposed program would allocate \$60 million for a Conditional Cultivator License Loan initiative. This program aims to offer low-interest loans to cultivators to sustain their operations, mitigating losses experienced. The loans are intended to help farmers retain jobs that might otherwise be lost and facilitate the purchase of seeds for the upcoming growing season.