



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Hinchey Announces Hudson Valley Priorities in Final State Budget

MICHELLE HINCHEY April 22, 2024



**ALBANY, NY** – Senator Michelle Hinchey today announced that numerous initiatives she created and championed are included in the final State Budget for FY'25, which will benefit Hudson Valley communities and New Yorkers statewide.

“We’ve delivered a state budget that brings substantial funding back to the 41st district, and although not all of our proposals survived three-way negotiations, I’m proud of the positive investments we’ve achieved for the Hudson Valley and New Yorkers across our state,” **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** “New York makes history as the first state in the nation to offer

paid prenatal leave, ensuring pregnant people can focus on their health and family without worrying about losing income. We eliminated costly insulin co-pays to make this life-saving medication more accessible and fought hard for our public schools, making sure that there are no cuts to education funding this year. As part of our work to take action on the housing crisis, we introduced new tenant and homeowner protections while making it easier to build more affordable housing. We continued the lowest working and middle-class tax rates in 70 years and delivered on many key local priorities that we'll be announcing very soon with community stakeholders. This year's prolonged process has been an especially difficult one, but we have a budget that lays a good foundation for our Hudson Valley communities, and I look forward to building on the progress we've made."

**Highlights of Hinchey's priorities that made it into the final State Budget include:**

**Tax Support for Kingston and Ulster's Sojourner Truth State Park**

When a State Park is created, the land it covers often becomes tax-exempt, which can put financial strain on local taxpayers. The final budget includes Senator Hinchey's plan to continue tax payments to the City of Kingston and the Town of Ulster, which host Sojourner Truth State Park. This will help prevent economic challenges for local residents caused by the Park's tax-exempt status, ensuring these Environmental Justice Areas receive support on par with other New York State Park Host Communities.

**SUNY New Paltz Impact Aid — \$300,000**

Senator Hinchey led the budget push for SUNY New Paltz Impact Aid and secured \$300,000. This funding will offer financial relief to Village of New Paltz residents from the costs of meeting the safety needs of SUNY students.

## **Boosting SUNY Funding & Expanding TAP**

As the representative of SUNY New Paltz, Columbia-Greene Community College, and Dutchess Community College, Senator Hinchey helped advance a \$60M increase in SUNY Operating Aid, a \$60M increase in Capital funding, and \$6M for Community Colleges.

For the first time since 2000, the budget increases the Tuition Assistance Program by \$53 million to make college more affordable. It increases the minimum award from \$500 to \$1,000 and adds part-time TAP for proprietary students. The budget also makes it easier for more students to qualify for TAP by raising the income limits:

- For dependent students, the household income limit is increasing from \$80,000 to \$125,000.
- The income ceiling for married couples without children is being raised from \$40,000 to \$60,000
- The maximum income limit for individual applicants is being raised from \$10,000 to \$30,000.

## **Dutchess Community College Housing & Food Insecurity Program — \$300,000**

A 2022 survey conducted by Dutchess Community College showed that 4% of students reported being homeless, while 17% identified as housing insecure. Senator Hinchey secured a \$150,000 increase in funding for DCC programs aimed at assisting low-income students facing housing and food insecurity. This funding will support initiatives like providing subsidized, year-round campus housing and food services for students in need.

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

As the representative of SUNY New Paltz, Senator Hinchey championed \$150,000 for the Benjamin Center's Science Lab Initiative (SLI). The SLI aims to establish science and technology labs in school districts across the mid-Hudson region and at SUNY New Paltz. Its objective is to foster student enthusiasm for science and advance STEM education.

### **Local Newspaper and Broadcast Media Jobs Tax Credit**

New York is now the first state in the nation to incentivize hiring local reporters and creating local jobs in journalism. Included in the final budget is an initiative championed by Senator Hinchey to establish a personal income and corporate franchise tax credit for independently owned print media or broadcast entities, including those that experienced workforce or circulation decline over the last five years. The first-of-its-kind tax credit will provide publishers a tax credit for 50% of the first \$50,000 of journalists' salaries. Eligible employers can also receive a \$5,000 credit for each new full-time position created. The maximum amount of payroll tax credit for current employees will be \$26 million statewide. Half of this will be for newsrooms with over 100 employees and the other half for those with fewer than 100 employees.

### **Including the Hudson River and Natural Swimming Locations in 'NY SWIMS' — \$150 Million**

\$150 million through the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation will fund the New York Statewide Investment in More Swimming (NY SWIMS) program. This initiative aims to enhance existing pools and build new ones in communities across the State. Senator Hinchey successfully advocated for a provision to include the Hudson River and natural swimming spots in this program, aiming to expand these opportunities in local areas.

### **SNUG Gun Violence Prevention Program — \$20.96 Million (Statewide)**

Senator Hinchey will direct a portion of the statewide funding for the SNUG Street Outreach Program to the Samadhi Recovery Community Outreach Center in Kingston.

SNUG is an evidence-based program aimed at preventing gun violence and reducing gang-related incidents. Trained outreach workers, known as credible messengers, engage with at-risk youth, working closely with law enforcement to prevent violence, respond to incidents, and connect young people with vital services such as mental health support, job opportunities, and education. Senator Hinchey first brought the SNUG model to Kingston through the 2021 State Budget.

**Bard Prison Initiative — \$300,000**

Senator Hinchey supported funding for the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), which enrolls incarcerated students in full-time degree programs from Bard College. The program has a proven record of reducing recidivism, saving taxpayer dollars, and returning justice-impacted individuals to their communities with greater career and economic mobility opportunities.

**Getting Equity for Belleayre Mountain Ski Center — \$12.5 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, due to Senator Hinchey's advocacy, the final budget includes a historic \$12 million increase in Belleayre funding to support capital and operational expenses.

**Alive Downtowns! — \$5 Million**

Hinchey championed funding to support a coalition of 13 downtown historic performing arts centers across Upstate New York, including the Ulster Performing Arts Center (UPAC) in Kingston and the Bardavon 1896 Opera House in Poughkeepsie. All are economic, educational, and cultural engines serving Upstate, which have a combined economic impact

of \$9 million for the communities they serve. To further support upstate arts organizations, Hinchey also supported \$500,000 for Arts Mid-Hudson and \$500,000 for the Arts Center of the Capital Region.

**Catskill & Adirondack Park Wilderness Protection — \$10 Million**

Three years ago, Senator Hinchey established a new funding allocation in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to guarantee equitable protection for the Catskill Park. This funding supports shared stewardship initiatives, including education, infrastructure maintenance, and general care of both the Catskills and Adirondack Parks. This year, Senator Hinchey secured a \$2 million increase over last year for a total of \$10 million in shared stewardship funding to protect the Catskill and Adirondack Parks.

**Catskill Center & Catskill Mountainkeeper — \$100,000**

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

**Catskill Science Collaborative Coordinated by the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies — \$180,000**

The Catskill Science Collaborative brings together universities, government researchers, and natural resource managers working in the Catskills to share data and resources and implement science-backed conservation strategies. The funds secured by Hinchey will contribute to three main areas: (1) Increasing Catskill Research Fellowships to tackle critical knowledge gaps and foster collaboration with indigenous communities, integrating indigenous knowledge into management practices; (2) Allocating resources for scientific infrastructure to improve knowledge sharing, thereby enhancing management practices, and (3) Broadening outreach initiatives to involve the general public in scientific activities.

### **Lyme Disease Research & Prevention**

As a result of strong advocacy by Senator Hinchey, who represents the Hudson Valley and Catskills regions, which have some of the highest incidences of Lyme disease in the state, \$69,400 was secured for Lyme disease research, prevention, and detection.

### **Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation (HVADC) — \$200,000**

Senator Hinchey has secured the first-ever state budget funding for HVADC for their work to support agricultural entrepreneurship, sustainability, and economic growth in the Hudson Valley and across New York State. The organization enhances capital access and offers business technical assistance to agricultural and food entrepreneurs, prioritizing inclusivity for low-to-moderate income and underserved communities. Working with diverse agricultural businesses like food processors and hubs, HVADC aids in expansion, job creation, and regional economic growth. Their programs feature one-on-one business assistance, funding accelerators, and statewide loan initiatives.

### **Public Utility Law Project — \$2 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 residents. The demand for PULP's assistance has surged in recent years, surpassing their current staff capacity. Recognizing this need, Senator Hinchey advocated for \$2 million to help PULP expand its team. This investment will help PULP meet the growing demand for its services and continue providing essential support to residents who rely on their expertise and advocacy.

### **Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) — \$883,334**

Senator Hinchey supported funding for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV), the only provider of comprehensive, free civil legal aid to low-income and vulnerable residents across all seven counties of the Hudson Valley, including Dutchess and Ulster. This funding supports various specialized units within LSHV, including its Housing, Veterans and Military Families, Family Defense and Kinship Care, Intimate Partner/Domestic Violence, and LGBTQIA+ Rights Units.

Led by Senator Hinchey's advocacy, rural and Hudson Valley schools have been saved from devastating funding cuts initially proposed by the Governor. The final budget also commits to studying the Foundation Aid formula to reassess how New York funds its public schools and develop a modernized formula with the goal of better funding public schools while relieving property taxpayers. Further, Senator Hinchey is pushing for one of the three required public hearings in this process to take place locally in the Hudson Valley.

Overall, Foundation Aid increased by \$934 million, a 3.9% increase over last year and a 1.8% increase over the Executive's initial proposal. The adopted budget also includes \$19 million for mental health services for school-aged children and authorizes a study to work towards a pathway for expanded afterschool programming.

#### **New Supplemental Empire State Child Tax Credit — \$350 Million**

The final budget includes a historic \$350 million for a new supplemental tax credit for families eligible for the Empire State Child Tax Credit. This credit provides direct support to working families along with the continuation of the lowest Middle-Class Tax Cuts in over 70 years.

#### **Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) — \$765.2 Million**

Local governments across New York State will receive a significant boost in AIM funding,



totaling \$765.2 million. This \$50 million increase, the first AIM increase since 2012, will help cities, towns, and villages fund essential local services, from programs to road maintenance.

### **Sales Tax Exemption for Residential Energy Storage**

A residential energy storage system is installed in homes to store electricity generated from renewable sources like solar panels or during off-peak times when electricity is cheaper. They allow homeowners to use stored energy during peak times, reducing reliance on the grid and potentially saving money on electricity bills. The budget includes a new two-year sales tax exemption on the installation of residential energy storage systems, starting June 1, 2024, and ending June 1, 2026, which will help keep costs down for consumers and make it easier for New Yorkers to upgrade and electrify their homes.

The final budget includes a housing package championed by Senator Hinchey dedicated to funding high-demand and oversubscribed housing programs while expanding affordable rental and homeowner units in rural and upstate areas.

### ***Increasing Rural and Upstate Housing Supply***

#### **Small Rental Development Initiative — \$7 Million**

The Small Rental Development Initiative supports housing projects of 20 units or fewer and single-family housing in rural areas. This initiative addresses the housing needs of rural communities by providing funding to local nonprofit housing organizations and authorities for the development and management of small-scale rental housing across New York State. Despite smaller developments often losing out on state and federal subsidies to larger

projects, Senator Hinchey ensured continuous support for this program in this year's budget, following her efforts to revive the program in 2022 after a five-year hiatus.

**Infill Housing Program — \$40 Million** (*NEW Housing Program*)

The goal of this program is to revive struggling neighborhoods while helping those who have been priced out of the housing market to become homeowners. Specifically, \$40 million will be allocated to the New York State Homes and Community Renewal for constructing affordable one- and two-family homes in upstate cities. These funds will cover construction expenses and provide subsidies to make the homes affordable for low- and moderate-income individuals looking to buy a home.

**Rental Renovation Initiative — \$40 Million** (*NEW Housing Program*)

This program will offer grants to small landlords to undertake significant upgrades to their rental properties. In return for these grants, the renovated units must be rented out at an affordable rate determined by the state HCR for a period of 10 years. The objective is to increase the number of affordable and well-maintained units available in the rental market.

**Housing Opportunities for the Future — \$150 Million** (*NEW Housing Program*)

Secured in the final budget is a new program to build rental and homeownership units across the state at a maximum of 130% AMI.

**Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Tax Exemption**

The final budget authorizes municipalities to adopt a local tax exemption to make it easier for homeowners to build ADUs, which creates more housing options. The exemption will last for five years, during which an individual won't have to pay taxes on the increase in their

property's value due to the renovation work.

### **Community Land Banks — \$10 Million**

Community Land Banks rehabilitate old buildings and transition them to long-term affordable homes. This fund will allow Land Banks to acquire and flip zombie properties across the state and create more long-term affordable housing.

### **Public Housing Authorities Outside NYC — \$75 Million**

This funding is allocated for public housing programs, specifically for significant renovations, moderate repairs, or demolishing and rebuilding multi-family rental housing. These properties are currently owned by public housing authorities under federal or state supervision, excluding those in New York City. The funds can be suballocated or transferred to different state departments, agencies, or public authorities for these purposes.

### **Rural Preservation Program — \$7.55 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.

### **New Tax Exemption for Converting Commercial Buildings into Rental Housing**

The final budget empowers municipalities to exempt newly constructed or converted rental housing from property taxes while they're being built, for a maximum of three years. After this construction period, the exemption will start at 96% and decrease by 4% each year after

that.

### ***Helping Seniors and New Yorkers with Disabilities Live Safely and Independently***

#### **ACCESS to HOME — \$4 Million** (*\$1M increase over last year's budget*)

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. The program is oversubscribed, and funding has not been increased since 2012. Senator Hinchey secured a \$1 million increase in program funding for a total of \$4 million.

### ***Tenant and Homeowner Protections***

#### **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.

### **Eviction Protection Funding — \$40 Million**

Funding will help ensure that tenants facing eviction proceedings in New York State have access to fair civil legal representation, helping to keep more families in their homes. \$40 million is designated for legal representation services, specifically for eviction cases in communities outside NYC.

### **Good Cause Tenant Protections**

Communities across the Hudson Valley, including Kingston, Hudson, New Paltz, and others, have asked the State to grant them the ability to enact Good Cause eviction protections locally after local laws were struck down by the courts citing the need for statewide legislation. The final budget grants localities outside NYC to opt-in to tenant protections and provides flexibility to set their own thresholds for portfolio size, FMR, owner-occupied standards, and more.

### **USDA 515 Rental Property Preservation — \$10 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 advocated to ensure the state invested in preserving and rehabbing these properties, like the Mitchell-Lama Program in urban areas.

New York is now the first state in the nation to provide pregnant people with 20 hours of paid leave for prenatal medical appointments. This new policy, supported by Senator Hinchey, addresses the **concerning trend** of maternal and infant mortality rates in the U.S.,

which have lagged far behind those of other developed nations. With this historic step, New York is prioritizing the health and well-being of expectant mothers, setting a precedent for equitable maternal healthcare nationwide. This will take effect on January 1, 2025.

The final budget advances further reproductive health protections, including requiring 30-minute paid breaks for breast milk expression in the workplace.

#### **Healthcare System Investment — \$7.5 Billion**

The final budget advances a \$7.5 billion investment in New York's healthcare system through modifications to the state's 1115 Medicaid Waiver, which will be used to promote health equity, diminish health disparities, and enhance access to primary and behavioral health care.

#### **Distressed and Safety Net Hospital Funding — \$800 Million**

The final budget includes an allocation of \$800 million to provide crucial support for distressed and safety-net hospitals. This funding aims to bolster healthcare institutions facing financial challenges and those serving vulnerable populations. With this investment, these hospitals can enhance their capacity to deliver essential medical services, maintain quality care standards, and serve their communities.

#### **Insurance Reimbursement for Mental Health Services**

To enhance access to mental health services, the budget requires commercial insurance to reimburse outpatient behavioral and substance use disorder treatment services at no less than the Medicaid rate. This directive aims to ensure equitable access to crucial mental health treatments for all individuals, regardless of their insurance coverage. The budget also allocates \$55 million towards the establishment of 200 new inpatient psychiatric beds at

State-run facilities.

### **Healthcare Safety Net Transformation Program**

A new program will be created within the Department of Health to help transform safety net hospitals across the state. This program will provide money to eligible hospitals for new buildings and help with day-to-day expenses. Its goal is to make sure these hospitals offer better access, fairness, quality, and results in healthcare, all while making sure they can stay financially stable.

### **Cost-of-Living Increases for Human Services Workers**

The budget includes a 2.84% cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment to increase wages for human services workers, including mental health workers. This includes a 1.7% targeted salary increase for specific support, direct care, clinical, and non-executive administrative staff.

### **Eliminating Co-Payments on Insulin**

Senator Hinchey and her colleagues prioritized making life-saving insulin more accessible and cost-effective. Starting January 1, 2025, New Yorkers enrolled in commercial health insurance policies will not have to pay any co-payments, deductibles, coinsurance, or other cost-sharing requirements for insulin.

### **Increasing Medicaid**

New York's Medicaid program is the second largest in the country, and the budget provides an aggregate increase in the amount of \$525 million to hospital services, \$285 million to nursing homes, and \$15 million to assisted living programs. These will all be in addition to last year's increases in the Medicaid Reimbursement Rate.

### **Opioid Settlement Funds — \$89.5 Million**

Opioid settlement funds are dollars secured through lawsuits or settlements against pharmaceutical companies or other entities that have contributed to the opioid addiction and overdose crisis. Opioid Settlement Funds can be used for ten priority areas, including harm reduction, treatment, investments across the service continuum, housing, recovery, priority populations, preventions, transport, public awareness, research, and administrative costs.

### **Fair Pay for Home Care Workers**

The final budget continues to phase in wage increases for home care providers who serve the disabled, injured, and elderly in New York State.

### **Expanding Mental Health Services**

The budget allocates funds to expand mental health services across various sectors, including \$33 million to enhance mental health services for first responders and aiding individuals with mental illnesses involved in the criminal justice system. Additionally, there is a \$75.8 million increase for Crisis Services, aimed at addressing serious mental illness and providing critical care to young people, along with an \$8 million increase to the Judiciary to support Mental Health Court operations.

### **Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program**

The final budget codifies the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program to provide funding for abortion providers and non-profit entities to support increased access to abortion care.

### **Community Doula Expansion Grant Program**



This program will fund community-based organizations for recruitment and retention and startup and administrative costs to increase the number of community doulas in New York State. The budget allows the Health Commissioner to issue a statewide order for doula services.

The enacted budget includes \$1.78 billion for the New York State Child Care Block Grant, an increase of \$754.4 million. This grant will provide subsidies for 119,000 eligible children statewide. The budget further includes \$280 million in underutilized federal pandemic funds to continue the Workforce Retention Grant program and provide another round of bonus payments to employees at 14,000 programs statewide. The budget continues \$5.6 million for the Child Care Facilitated Enrollment program in New York State. This program is designed to help qualifying working parents access child care.

Differential payment rates of at least 10% have been allocated for childcare providers who care for children experiencing homelessness, along with those who provide care to children during non-traditional hours.

More youth development programs and supports included in the final budget are:

- \$103.2 million for After School Programs, an increase of over \$20 million from last year's budget.
- \$10 million for the Youth Sports Initiative.
- \$15.6 million for the Youth Development Program.
- \$55.4 million for the Summer Youth Employment Program.
- \$38.8 million to provide year-round employment opportunities to low-income youths in targeted regions outside of New York City.

- \$8.1 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program.

Senator Hinchey is leading efforts to ensure New York's transition to clean energy protects our food supply and environment. To achieve the goals of the CLCPA and protect local farmland, waterways, forests, and lands, New York must incentivize smart solar development that better serves farms, communities, and the State. Too often, these finite resources are targeted for development, most recently by solar developers.

The final budget moves the Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) to the Department of Public Service (DPS). It also incorporates elements from multiple bills authored by Senator Hinchey, expanding upon the Executive's RAPID Act to create first-ever protections for prime agricultural land through ORES and bring greater community input to the siting process.

- **Minimizing Adverse Impacts on Prime Farmland:** Requires ORES to minimize significant adverse impacts on agricultural lands, with special consideration given to land within agricultural districts and with mineral soil groups 1-4. Provisions will apply to all new applications received by ORES.
- **Exempting Farmland from the Build Ready Program:** Farmland actively used for agricultural production, prime farmland (soil groups 1-4), and land within agricultural districts won't be considered for development under NYSERDA's Build-Ready Program unless needed for project interconnection infrastructure. Priority will be given to sites like brownfields, landfills, and underutilized commercial or industrial areas.

**Statewide Solar Project Tracking System:** Directs ORES, in consultation with DPS, to create and regularly update a map of all renewable energy projects, both approved and proposed, throughout the application process in the State of New York. This map will show the location, size, and power generation capacity of all approved and proposed solar facilities, including incomplete applications and notices of intent received by the office. 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.

**Restored Funding to the Environmental Protection Fund and Clean Water Infrastructure Act**

The final budget successfully reversed cuts to the Environmental Protection Fund, investing \$400 million to support climate priorities across New York State. The budget also allocated an additional \$250 million over the Executive proposal for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act and committed \$500 million to support local water quality projects in every region of the state.

The EPF plays a vital role in safeguarding key elements of the state's ecosystem, such as drinking water, food supply, air quality, parks, and state lands. Additionally, the EPF supports the implementation of local and statewide initiatives focused on reducing pollution, mitigating climate change, and combating invasive species, among other priorities.

*Project highlights funded in the EPF this year include:*

- \$21 million for Farmland Preservation
- \$13 million for Environmental Justice
- \$19 million for Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Projects

### **NYSERDA EmPower+ Program — \$50 Million**

This funding will be used to support customers enrolled in the NYSERDA EmPower+ Program to electrify their homes, providing subsidies to guarantee customers don't spend more than 6% of their income on their electric bills.

### **The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation — \$1 Billion**

Parks will receive \$1 billion, with a \$47 million carveout to plant 25 million trees by 2033 and \$300 million in Capital to enhance and improve parks statewide.

### **Cornell Biobased and Hemp Processing Initiative — \$5 Million**

Hemp is an extraordinarily versatile plant that can be used to make thousands of industrial products, from textiles to building materials like hempcrete, as well as paper and packaging. Senator Hinchey supported the effort to establish a research lab in Geneva, New York, as part of Cornell University's Biobased and Hemp Processing Initiative. These labs will assist entrepreneurs of all sizes in developing hemp and other biomaterial crops as alternatives to environmentally harmful plastics. Additionally, Cornell will collaborate with other institutions, such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, to research and commercialize hemp biomaterials, focusing particularly on its potential uses in construction materials. Senator Hinchey championed several investments to support local workforce development initiatives, workers, small upstate businesses, and arts organizations, including the following key investments:

### **Tier 6 Reform**

The budget includes long overdue and critical Tier 6 reform by changing the final average

salary calculation window for Tier 6 members from five to three years to help incentivize workforce retention.

### **Minority and Women-Owned Business Development and Lending Program — \$1 Million**

This funding will provide financial support to minority- and women-owned businesses. It will also contribute to projects and programs that encourage entrepreneurship among minority individuals and women throughout New York State. The final budget also increases the grant amounts for Entrepreneurial Assistance Centers from \$175,000 to \$250,000 to support small businesses and MWBEs across the state and help establish EACs in unserved areas.

### **Extending Cocktails To-Go for Restaurants and Bars**

During the pandemic, to-go drinks were a critical lifeline for many restaurants and bars across New York State, helping many establishments survive. Drinks to-go were set to expire next year, and the final budget extends this capability for eight years, allowing restaurants and bars to continue these sales.

### **Authorizing Movie Theaters to Sell Liquor**

A provision in the recently adopted state budget will allow movie theaters throughout the state to sell hard liquor. This is a change from the previous law, which only allowed theaters to sell beer, wine, and cider.

### **Tourism Matching Grants Program — \$3.5 Million**

Led by Senator Hinchey, the budget invests \$3.5 million in the Tourism Matching Grants Program, which is used by county and regional Tourism Promotion Agencies to help communities attract visitors and investment.

### **New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) — \$40.6 Million**

The New York State Council on the Arts funding nurtures the visual, literary, media, and performing arts, with a focus on arts education in underserved communities. It also enhances New York's creative scene by bringing together industry leaders, offering professional development, and sharing valuable resources. These aims are primarily achieved through the agency's grant-making activity.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Food Committee, Senator Hinchey has delivered four of the best budgets for Agriculture in recent years, advancing significant state support for New York farmers and creating a more equitable food system that benefits New Yorkers and farm businesses. Several initiatives within the agriculture budget include the following:

### **Nourish New York — \$54.25 Million (*\$4.25 Million Increase*)**

In 2021, Senator Hinchey authored a law that made Nourish New York a permanent state program, requiring annual funding to ensure food from participating New York farms could reach families in need. 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 individuals and families facing food insecurity.

### **Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) — \$57.9 Million**

This allocation for HPNAP will help emergency food providers support the demand for hunger relief at a time when food prices have skyrocketed.

### **Healthy School Meals — \$180 Million**

The final budget continues to invest in free school meals for schools participating in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which ensures schools in high-needs areas can serve free breakfast and lunch to students. Senator Hinchey will continue to lead the

fight for the state to establish a universal Healthy School Meals program until 100% of New York students are covered.

**Double Up Food Bucks — \$2 Million**

This program provides users of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with a \$1 for \$1 match to buy fresh, New York-grown fruits and vegetables at participating small retail/grocery and farm direct sites. The \$2 million in state funding secured will be leveraged to bring in an additional \$2 million in federal funding. These resources will continue to give approximately 100,000 additional SNAP shoppers access to the program.

**Paying Farmers for Forest Management — \$500,000**

The final budget includes Senator Hinchey's initiative 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 CLCPA goals, and provide revenue to help farmers afford to stay in farming.

**Farmland for a New Generation Program — \$700,000** (*\$200,000 increase over last year's budget*)

Farmland for a New Generation New York supports a network of Regional Navigators with dedicated staff that provide training and on-the-ground customized support to help farmers retire and transition their lands to those entering the trade.

**New York Farm Viability Institute — \$2.5 Million** (*\$600,000 increase over last year's budget*)

In response to the escalating impacts of climate change on agriculture and food security, securing funding for agricultural research has become increasingly crucial. The New York Farm Viability Institute plays a vital role in advancing such research efforts, focusing on

enhancing farm resilience to climate challenges and promoting the cultivation of new sustenance crops within the state. Senator Hinchey has successfully secured a \$600,000 funding increase for the institute. This significant boost brings the total allocation to \$2.5 million, empowering the institute to expand its research efforts and provide essential support to farmers across New York.

### **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Farmers Grant Program — \$1 Million**

This initiative aims to expand opportunities in agriculture to farmers who face disproportionate social or economic barriers through targeted grant support, contributing to a more equitable agricultural industry.

### **Beginning Farmers Grant Program — \$1 Million**

With access to funding through this \$1 million grant program, young and beginning farmers can receive support in getting their operations off the ground, overcoming the financial barriers often associated with starting a new agricultural business.

Senator Hinchey supported state investments to help local highway departments keep heavily traveled roads safe for New York drivers, including the following programs and initiatives:

### **Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program — \$598 Million**

The Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) provides essential assistance to municipalities in funding the construction and repair of local roads, bridges, and other needed restorations.

### **State Touring Routes Program — \$140 Million**



This funding stream was created to help cities, towns, and villages offset the costs of capital projects on New York-signed touring routes. Funds are based on how many miles of touring routes a municipality is responsible for maintaining.

### **Extreme Winter Recovery Program — \$100 Million**

Blizzards, deep freezes, and other severe winter events can severely deteriorate local roads and other infrastructure. The Extreme Winter Recovery Program functions to fix the infrastructure impacted by severe weather, building resiliency and protecting the safety of New York drivers.

The final budget also extends funding for bridge and pothole repairs and repaving through the following programs:

- **BRIDGE NY — \$200 Million**
- **Pave our Potholes Program (POP) — \$200 Million**
- **PAVE NY — \$150 Million**

The enacted budget puts meaningful resources into public safety and the protection of all New Yorkers, building on previous efforts by:

### **Preventing Hate Crimes**

The final budget expands the range of offenses that can be prosecuted as hate crimes and invests an additional \$35 million in the Securing Communities Against Hate Grant to safeguard houses of worship, religious schools, and other vulnerable locations.

### **Enhancing Public Safety with Strategic Community Investments**

\$347 million is included in the budget to continue efforts to reduce and prevent gun violence in New York, as well as \$35.7 million to combat and prosecute domestic violence crimes.

### **Reducing Recidivism and Improving Workforce Reentry**

The enacted budget includes \$7.1 million to provide more intensive supervision for individuals on parole through the Supervision Against Violent Engagement (SAVE) program. The budget also expands transitional housing and college programming across all state prisons and extends \$1 million for transportation for visitors to and from State Correctional Facilities.

### **Combatting Retail Theft Crimes**

The budget creates a Class E felony for assaulting a retail worker and allows for aggregation of retail theft crimes to make it easier to prosecute repeat offenders.

### **Combatting AI Deep Fakes**

To protect against sexually explicit artificial intelligence, the budget expands the existing statutory right to privacy, which says that it is unlawful to use a person's name, portrait, or picture for commercial advertising without consent, by adding "likeness and voice" to the list of protected characteristics. In an effort to combat the use of deep fakes in elections, the budget requires distributors or publishers of "materially deceptive" political communications to disclose the use of digitization. It also gives candidates a private right of action to seek injunctive relief in court and attorneys' fees.

### **Ensuring Limousine Safety**

The final budget includes measures to improve safety standards for limousines based on

recommendations from the Limousine Passenger Safety Task Force, which was created in the wake of the tragic Schoharie and Cutchogue limo crashes of 2018 and 2015 that claimed the lives of 24 New Yorkers. The budget introduces a requirement to retire stretch limousines after ten years of service or 350,000 miles, enhancing safety standards based on a bill sponsored by Senator Hinchey. Additionally, penalties for operating suspended stretch limos due to safety defects will be increased. Mandates for stretch limos include equipping them with essential safety tools like window break tools and fire extinguishers, as well as anti-intrusion and roll-over protection devices. Safety data reporting will also be improved, alongside a new requirement for pre-trip safety briefings for limo passengers to ensure awareness of safety protocols.