



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

## Senator Lea Webb & Assemblymember Anna Kelles Announce Funding for the State Theatre of Ithaca

LEA WEBB September 30, 2024

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**ITHACA, NY** —Today, Senator Lea Webb and Assemblymember Anna Kelles announced \$5 million in state funding for the Upstate New York Alive Downtowns! Coalition, which supports historic theaters from Jamestown to Poughkeepsie. As part of this allocation, the State Theatre of Ithaca will receive \$103,000 to help cover its operational expenses, providing a significant boost to this beloved community venue. This funding, part of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 State Budget passed earlier this year, reflects a broader commitment to revitalizing

historic theaters throughout Upstate New York.

Senator Webb, Assemblymember Kelles, and their colleagues in the State Legislature successfully advocated for the inclusion of this funding, emphasizing the vital public service provided by historic theaters, akin to aquariums, parks, and zoos—all of which receive state budget support. This budget victory will aid historic theaters, including Ithaca's State Theatre, in their recovery from the severe financial strain caused by pandemic-related closures. These theaters serve millions across Upstate New York, enriching local communities with art, culture, music, and theater, while also acting as key economic drivers and regional tourism attractions.

“Since 1928, the State Theatre has been a cultural cornerstone of the Southern Tier,” said **Senator Lea Webb**. “I’m thrilled that we were able to secure these funds to support such a treasured institution in the heart of Ithaca. The State Theatre not only offers music, dance, theater, and community experiences, but it also contributes significantly to our local economy. Theaters across Upstate New York faced immense challenges during the pandemic, and this investment will help ensure that they continue to serve as community hubs and engines of economic recovery for our region.”

**Said Assemblymember Anna Kelles**, “The State Theatre, opened in 1928, is a longstanding critical cultural pillar in our community, hosting acts through the ages from Vaudeville shows and early movie screenings in two separate theaters when the balcony was temporarily separated, to plays and brilliant concert performances from all over the world. The theatre has changed its face over the decades but always served to enrich the lives of residents and tourists to the area. The theatre has also served as a critically important home for other theater and dance companies in need of a beautiful home. I’m honored to champion for funding and support the theatre as a cornerstone of our arts and culture for generations to come.”

“As one of Ithaca's most cherished landmarks, the State Theatre plays an essential role in bringing our community together through the power of the arts,” said **Mayor Robert Cantelmo**. “This funding is not only an investment in the State Theatre, but also in the future of Ithaca’s cultural and economic vitality. I’m grateful to Senator Webb, Assemblymember Kelles, and all those who fought to ensure that this historic venue can continue to enrich our city and serve as a hub for creativity, entertainment, and community engagement.”

“We are extremely grateful knowing that New York lawmakers still understand the real financial impact historic theatres have on all upstate economies while offering great public benefits to the citizens of this state. This support will allow iconic arts venues like The State Theatre of Ithaca to provide continued access for all citizens while also helping to spur growth in our surrounding downtown regions for many years to come,” said **Doug Levine, Executive Director of the State Theatre of Ithaca**.

“The State Theatre of Ithaca is an integral part of our community. The State improve the quality of life for Tompkins County residents, and the high-quality performances at the State Theatre drives new economic benefit to the county, by bringing visitors from the northeast to see a show, stay over night, and invest in our community. Thank you for investing in this cultural gem and important community partner,” said **Peggy Coleman, Interim President of the Tompkins Chamber and Visit Ithaca**.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The **State Theatre of Ithaca, Inc.** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that owns and operates the last remaining historic theater in downtown Ithaca. Since 1928, the State Theatre has been a major cultural venue in the Finger Lakes region. With a seating capacity of 1,600, it remains the largest venue of its kind in Ithaca. Today, the theater hosts over 75 events annually, including concerts, theatrical productions, comedy shows, film screenings, dance performances, readings, and community events.

Each year, the State Theatre serves an audience of 55,000 patrons, welcomes 2,700 schoolchildren, and relies on the support of 300 members and 100 volunteers. The organization employs eight full-time staff members to ensure the theater to offer a diverse range of performances and cultural programming for the community.

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**[Watch the Full Announcement \(LINK\)](#) | [Photos From the Announcement \(LINK\)](#)**