



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patricia Fahy

## Op-Ed: No Man Left Behind

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| ISSUE: **EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT, AFFORDABILITY**



Addressing state workers shortages prevalent among young men, and restoring hope

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New York State has been a leader in economic and social progress, championing landmark policies that uplift families, expand educational opportunities, and offer meaningful opportunities. Over the past several decades, women have made remarkable advancements, particularly in education attainment, wage parity, and career advancement. While there is still more to be done, we can't lose sight of some troubling economic trends emerging among

young men, particularly those who are out-of-school. Gaps in employment, educational attainment, and declining economic mobility threaten our overall progress on the state's workforce, economy, and future.

That's why I've re-introduced legislation to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in New York. The federal EITC has historically been one of the most effective tools for reducing poverty and incentivizing work, lifting millions of Americans out of poverty each year since its inception. My legislation will provide a much-needed financial boost to middle and low-income New Yorkers, with a particular focus on supporting young men, especially those between the ages of 18 and 25, who are increasingly feeling left behind, if not left out, in today's economy.

Young men in New York are facing unique economic challenges that demand urgent attention. Men now make up only 40% of undergraduate students in the state, while college enrollment for young men has been steadily declining. In the City of Albany, only 5,841 men earned degrees in 2021, compared to 8,273 women—a gap that reflects a broader statewide trend of declining male educational attainment. Fewer men are accessing the skills and credentials needed for today's job market, making them more vulnerable to ensuing economic instability. Though apprenticeships offer an alternative path to stable, well-paying jobs, participation among young men in registered programs has stagnated.

Meanwhile, homeownership—a key factor in long-term wealth building—has become increasingly out of reach. In some parts of Upstate New York, the homeownership rate for adults under age 35 is as low as 5.2%, particularly in urban areas where affordability is at a historic low. For young men with lower wages and fewer assets, the dream of owning a home is slipping further away.

The wage landscape tells an equally troubling story. While conversations around gender wage gaps have focused on pay disparities for women, young men in lower-income brackets are also experiencing wage stagnation and job instability. Traditional industries that once provided stability—manufacturing, construction, and transportation—are shrinking, failing to keep pace with inflation, or require career and skill preparation that may be out of reach. Automation and technological shifts have displaced many workers. As of last year, youth unemployment in New York was the second-highest in the nation. For young men, this challenge is particularly stark, as they face higher joblessness rates than their female counterparts.

For decades, the Earned Income Tax Credit has been one of the most effective tools to combat poverty while encouraging work, but New York's current structure does not do enough to reach struggling young men, particularly those aged 18-25 *without children*. The federal EITC provides significantly smaller benefits to single, childless workers and none at all to those below the age of 25—leaving behind many of the very individuals who need incentives and support the most. My legislation seeks to address this by expanding eligibility to younger workers, lowering the age threshold from 25 to 18 so that those just entering the workforce can benefit sooner. It will also significantly increase credit amounts and provide a needed financial boost for more young men, especially those in apprenticeships and trade programs.

By putting more money in the pockets of young workers, we can provide them with the financial stability necessary for them to invest in education and skills-based training, secure housing, and build the foundation for long-term economic success. When young men struggle, families, businesses, and communities feel the impact. Labor shortages in the trades, declining homeownership rates, and rising economic disillusionment among young men are challenges we ignore at our own peril.

It's about incentives for young men who want to work, want to build a future, and want to contribute to our economy and aren't left struggling to make ends meet or without hope. It's an investment in our workforce and our future.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2025-S4425

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Provides for the advance payment of the earned income tax credit

February 04, 2025

In Senate Committee **Budget and Revenue**

Sponsored by **Patricia Fahy**

Do you support this bill?