



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin Malavé Dilan

## Senator Dilan Announces Passage of 2014 – 2015 State Budget

MARTIN MALAVÉ DILAN April 1, 2014

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*\$138 billion spending plan funds citywide Pre-K, increases to TAP and higher-ed opportunity programs.*

Senator Martin Malavé Dilan (D-Bushwick) announced the passage of a \$138 billion budget that includes \$300 million for universal Pre Kindergarten programs in New York City, new government reforms and increased funding to social programs.

“This year’s budget has made great strides to meet new, and greater demands while continuing to offset the gaps left by previous year’s cuts. I commend Governor Cuomo and my Senate Colleagues for delivering a responsible spending plan that spends smart, invests in our students, and offers some much-needed relief for our working families,” said Senator Dilan.

The 2014 – 2015 budget addresses a number of crucial issues this year, including: education, additional aid to schools, and higher education; environmental protections; senior health and housing; expansion of health services and healthcare worker protections.

Among the many notable highlights are:

### **Education**

- \$1.1 billion increase in school aid.
- \$300 million to fund Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs in New York City.
- \$165/student increase to the Tuition Assistance Program; \$75/student increase in community college base aid; \$749,000 increase to the Higher Education Opportunity program; and an increase in college student lending.
- \$5 million increase in Library aid.

### **Seniors**

- \$4.1 million increase of the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program and increase the number of seniors eligible for coverage.

- Increases the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program's income cap from \$21,000 increase to \$50,000.
- \$25.3 million in Community Services for the Elderly, a \$10 million increase.

## **Transportation**

- 4.8 billion in statewide transit aid, including a \$90.7 million increase in funding to the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA).
- A reduction of \$10 million by the Senate of the Executive's proposal to transfer \$40 million from MTA operating funds.

## **Environment**

- Increasing the Environmental Protection Fund to \$162 million; the Senate increased the EPF by \$5 million over the proposed executive budget's \$4 million.
- \$92.5 million in park infrastructure improvements.

## **Housing & Health**

- \$122 million allocation to fund a four percent cost of living wage increase for the state's lowest paid direct care workers.
- Establishes the Out-of-Network (OON) Emergency Service Reimbursement to protect patients from high out-of-network billing.
- Establishes Safe Patient Handling legislation that limits the ratio of patients to registered nurses.

- Creates a two-year, \$312 million foreclosure avoidance and amelioration program, and redirects \$613 million in settlement funds toward foreclosure prevention programs.
- Establishes a \$500/year renters and homeowners tax credit, this year and next, for households of annual incomes not to exceed \$200,000.

“This year’s budget marks the fourth consecutive on-time spending plan this body has passed. In all, it closes gaps left by cuts of previous years and makes new investments in the years to come; and there are also a number of notable policy decisions,” said Senator Dilan. “However, there were some areas where we could have, and should have, done more in both terms of funding and as a matter of responsible public policy.”

Those areas include:

### **Campaign finance**

After years of pushing for fair election reforms and campaign finance measures to ensure fair elections in New York, a pilot public financing measure included in the 2014-15 budget fell far from the mark. Senator Dilan was among many who questioned the intent of the program that would create a voluntary, 6 to 1 matching fund system for candidates in the upcoming election for Office of State Comptroller. Not only is there less than 80 days for the board of elections to implement new regulations, but there are currently no challengers in the race. Senator Dilan remarked that the proposal was “designed to fail.”

Although ethics reforms were included as part of the plan—including disclose of independent expenditures and greater enforcement of current laws—the measure as a whole leaves much to be desired.

## **MTA Funds Sweep**

Leading up to the passage of the 2014-15 budget, Senator Dilan adamantly opposed a proposed \$40 million sweep of dedicated funds to cover Metropolitan Transportation Authority operating costs. Senator Dilan joined transit advocates, riders and Senate colleagues to call for additional investments in transit infrastructure and additional services. Although the proposed sweep was reduced to \$30 million, the cuts to the dedicated funds will be unable to address increased demands to bus and train lines in the district, and continue a terrible precedent.

## **Speed Cameras and 20 MPH City Speed Limit**

There was an end-of-negotiations push for additional speed cameras in New York City and a proposal to include Senator Dilan's city-wide 20 m.p.h bill. Both measures failed to be included in the budget. However, there remains strong support for both in the legislature and Senator Dilan will continue to advocate for the passage of them by the close of legislative session.

## **The DREAM Act**

Again Senate leadership failed to include \$25 million in funding that would provide children of undocumented New Yorkers the ability to draw from the state's Tuition Assistance Program to attend New York's colleges and universities. Equal access to education is a fundamental Democratic principle. The Dream Act ensures that the opportunity and tools to fully realize the American Dream are available to all. The fight for the DREAM Act in New York is far from over.