



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

IDC releases its 'Changing New York Agenda'

DIANE J. SAVINO January 5, 2017



Albany, NY — The Independent Democratic Conference on Wednesday unveiled the Changing New York Agenda, a comprehensive policy package focused on improving the lives of working- and middle-class New Yorkers across the state.

The dynamic plan shapes policy in six categories: education, employment, housing, providing for families and seniors, criminal justice reform and quality-of-life. This new, bold agenda builds on the IDC's past visionary plans Invest New York, Affordable New York and A

Blueprint for a Better New York to continue to address the most salient issues in the state.

Chief among the IDC's proposals are:

College Affordability for All - With ever-rising college tuition costs, increasing Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) awards will help all students who reside in New York obtain a degree. By raising the income eligibility cap from \$80,000 to \$200,000 thousands more students will benefit from state aid. TAP awards would also become available to any resident, regardless of immigration status.

Raise the Age - The stain of a criminal record prevents 16- and 17-year-olds treated as adults in the justice system from leading productive lives later on. New York trails behind 48 states that treat teens as juveniles. The IDC will be working with stakeholders to craft legislation to finally raise the age in New York.

Made by New Yorkers - Manufacturers must stay in the state, but one reason they close up shop, taking away good-paying jobs, is burdensome property taxes. Currently these firms receive a 20% property tax rebate, which should be increased to 100% to incentivize manufacturers staying here. The IDC also seeks to provide grants for smaller businesses looking to expand in the state and create a new, knowledge exchange program to help businesses connect with experts in the state to advance their ventures. The IDC will push for Buy American provisions for state contracts, by working to create the Made in America Rating System (MARS) to protect American workers from unfair competition. The IDC also envisions a "Made By New Yorkers" label for products created in the state, with New York State products using the "Made in the USA" standard.

Accelerate the Phase-in of Foundation Aid - In response to a ruling by State Court of Appeals that New York State had underfunded its primary school system by billions of dollars, the

Foundation Aid formula was created in FY 2007-08, however its funding was interrupted by the 2007-09 recession. The IDC proposes making a \$1.47 billion investment directly to the Foundation Aid formula, for the first year of a three-year commitment to achieve complete funding.

Protecting Immigrant Communities - Immigrants are the fabric of New York State. Nearly two-thirds of defendants in the US immigration court system face a judge without legal help because immigrants have no right to counsel. Last year, the IDC secured \$250,000 in funding for the Vera Institute of Justice for services and expenses related to assisting detained immigrants facing deportation. The IDC proposes increasing funding to \$11.1 million to ensure that all immigrants, regardless of status, have access to legal representation. The \$11.1 million in funding represents an increase to New York City of \$870,000 and state funding by \$3.35 million. By funding legal services for those facing deportation we can ensure that immigrants are afforded due process and equal treatment while eliminating disparities and enhancing the integrity of our current justice system.

Combatting Homelessness - The homelessness crisis in New York City, in particular, cannot be solved by spending taxpayer dollars to place homeless families and individuals in temporary hotels and motels. The expensive, unstable and sometimes unsafe settings do nothing to solve the crisis. The IDC supports the creation of the Home Stability Support program to subsidize housing for homeless families and individuals, those on the brink of homelessness and families facing domestic violence or hazardous conditions. The program would save taxpayers money, while creating stability for families and individuals by giving them a place to call home.

“New Yorkers want real results and solutions to their everyday concerns. The IDC is going to make a positive change for New York’s working- and middle-class families who struggle to send their children to college through our College Affordability for All plan, make sure our

teenagers are treated as such by Raising the Age of criminal responsibility and create good-paying jobs through our Made by New Yorkers vision,” said IDC Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

“The IDC has always changed New York for the better. After finally closing the Gap Elimination Adjustment last year, this session we will work towards accelerating the implementation of foundation aid to fairly fund our schools. Our visionary agenda also seeks to bring good-paying jobs upstate through the Made by New Yorkers program to keep manufacturing jobs here and showcase products made in this state,” said IDC Deputy Leader David Valesky (D-Syracuse).

“The IDC is a voice for all New Yorkers and I’m especially proud that our agenda advocates for property tax rebates for vulnerable seniors, college affordability for our students and protections for our workers. When policy can make an impactful change — ensuring a senior can afford to live at home, making sure a student receives tuition assistance and shielding workers from bad actors— it is worth fighting for,” said Senator Diane Savino (D-SI/Brooklyn).

“Each of these proposals have very clear positive impacts for so many communities throughout New York. From expanding access to affordable higher education to incentivizing manufacturers to stay here through property tax rebates, the IDC policy agenda represents a comprehensive plan to help our economy grow and thrive in the future,” said Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland).

“Our legislative priorities this upcoming session show the IDC’s commitment to investing in New York families who have helped solidify this State as the progressive beacon that it is today. Our commitment to making the State more affordable, more fair, and more prepared for the future shines through in this year’s ‘Changing New York’ agenda. The creation of a

Class 1-A for condo and coop owners will result in fairer tax treatment and will keep condos and coops affordable, establishment of a property tax cap in New York City will provide the City with the same tax cap provisions enjoyed by other cities across the State, the IDC's homelessness package will allow for the creation of more affordable housing units to keep families out of shelters and in their homes, and the 'Made By New Yorkers' program will help grow new ideas in the State of New York. It is clear, this session the IDC will invest in our State in ways that most others would not in order to create real, progressive change for our future," said Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens).

"This year's 'Changing New York' agenda is one that will vastly improve the lives of all New Yorkers. Important criminal justice policies, like raising the age of criminal responsibility, will have a real impact on our young people, especially in our communities of color. Our No Worker Left Behind proposal will bring justice to car wash workers who have long experienced wage theft in their industry. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the IDC to see the change that these policies will bring," said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn)

"As I begin my first legislative session I am excited to get to work on the 'Changing New York' agenda that the IDC has put forth. We are ensuring that all young New Yorkers have bright futures by making college more affordable, including undocumented immigrants. At the same time we are protecting our vulnerable immigrant community by providing those in immigration court with legal counsel so that they can have a fair hearing. These are policies that when enacted will make our communities stronger and fairer for all New Yorkers," said Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan).

Other signature issues include:

Increasing civil defense funding for housing court litigants - Many tenants who find themselves in housing court are unaware of their rights and lack access to sufficient legal counsel. The IDC will work with legal groups throughout the state to identify the necessary amounts.

No Worker Left Behind- While home health aides care for our most vulnerable citizens they earn a meager \$10.75 an hour and personal care aides make just a little more at \$11.73 a hour. Subpar wages in this fast-growing industry have lead to a high-turnover for health care workers, making it hard for consumers to build enduring relationships with their aides. Half the human service workers, like social workers or child care workers, earn less than \$15 per hour, even though two thirds require college degrees to work. These workers often use their personal vehicles to commute long distances to meet their clients, without reimbursement. While New York State raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, it is still an inadequate rate for caregivers. The IDC proposes raising their wages incrementally over six years so their earnings reach above the statewide minimum wage. These workers are paid through Medicaid and it would cost the state \$45 million in the first year and by its final implementation \$270 million a year. The IDC also proposes making workers hired through the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program eligible under the Wage Parity Law so they will be paid at the same rate as other home care workers.

Workers in the car wash industry receive tips differently than in other industries such as restaurants. Because tracking worker hours and tips is difficult and time consuming, workers are subject to wage theft by employers who fail to make up the difference between their wages and tips. Senator Hamilton's proposal, S.2541, would make car wash workers eligible for the full minimum wage, without the tip credit.

Enhancing the Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE) and Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE) - The SCHE/DHE programs help senior and disabled residents remain in

their homes through exemptions on property taxes. However, the qualifying income limits remain astoundingly low. While income thresholds for similar programs, such as SCRIE/DRIE, were increased by the IDC to help more seniors and disabled tenants, the SCHE/DHE benefit remains at a combined income limit of just \$29,000, with a “sliding scale” option for those making over \$29,000, but less than \$37,400. In order to restore parity between these programs, and reflect the rising cost of living in New York, the IDC would enhance SCHE/DHE by increasing the income limit to \$50,000, with the “sliding scale” ceiling being \$58,400 for lesser tax relief.

Leaders and experts agreed that the IDC’s plan would change the state for the better.

“I congratulate the efforts of the IDC in putting forward meaningful proposals to help alleviate the economic challenges facing working families. TWU Local 100 looks forward to working with the IDC this legislative session to move forward proposals that will help all New Yorkers.” said John Samuelson, President of TWU Local 100.

“We commend the Independent Democratic Conference on their detailed legislative agenda, which outlines many proposals to improve the lives of New Yorkers, including hundreds of thousands of members of our Union. We strongly support the proposal to extend worker protections to all home care workers. In addition, the clean water measures are particularly important, given the crisis affecting 1199SEIU members in Newburgh. We look forward to working with Senator Klein and the members of his conference to help achieve this ambitious agenda,” said George Gresham, president, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East.

“Wage theft affects millions of workers in New York State, and particularly those in the car wash industry. The IDC is once again demonstrating great leadership on behalf of working people by endorsing legislation that eliminates the car wash tip credit, a move that would

help ensure that employees in the industry receive the wages they are entitled to. The RWDSU commends the IDC for continued focus on the important economic issues that matter to families who are struggling to earn a decent living,” said Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

“I applaud the efforts of the IDC to seek meaningful remedies to the economic challenges of working families. DC37 looks forward to working with the IDC this legislative session to advance several significant proposals, including expanding and reforming the Tuition Assistance Program, increasing funding for affordable child care, and providing more State funding for NYCHA,” said Henry Garrido, DC 37 executive director.

"From fighting together for a higher minimum wage and paid family leave to this year's proposals for making day care and college more affordable, we are proud to stand with our partners in the IDC as they help lead the charge for working New Yorkers," said Peter Ward, President of the New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council.

“Providing a workplace retirement savings option in a changing world where fewer companies offer pensions or 401(k)s would be a huge step toward helping millions of New Yorkers build financial security and reducing dependence on public assistance. AARP applauds Senator Klein and the IDC for their leadership in backing a strong solution to a growing crisis, and for an overall plan to help the middle class and struggling New Yorkers afford rent, utilities and other key necessities. That’s especially critical to older New Yorkers on fixed or limited incomes,” said Beth Finkel, AARP New York State director.

Changing the Way New York Educates

"I want to thank the IDC for recognizing that major investments in the public schools, including increasing Foundation Aid and expanding Community Schools -- along with after-school, dual language and mental health programs -- are critical steps if we are going to continue New York's progress in providing all our students with the education they need," said Michael Mulgrew, President, United Federation of Teachers.

"The IDC's push to accelerate and, ultimately, fully fund the Foundation Formula dovetails perfectly with NYSUT's goal to ensure that every student, no matter where they live, has the opportunities they need to be successful in school. We also applaud the IDC's commitment to expanding community schools and afterschool programs. The IDC recognizes the importance of making college more affordable while investing more in SUNY, CUNY and our community colleges, and we are ready from Day One of the upcoming session to work with Leader Klein and his conference members to make that happen," said Andrew Pallotta, Executive Vice President, New York State United Teachers.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to participate in a high-quality afterschool program. By providing a safe place to go outside of school hours, afterschool programs offer physical activity, nutrition, and academic support, while helping working families. When kids are in a safe, structured environment, parents can focus on working rather than worrying. The New York State Network for Youth Success applauds the IDC's support for high-quality afterschool programs. We look forward to working together to ensure that all students have access to these programs," said Kelly Sturgis, executive director, New York State Network for Youth Success.

"One in five young people in New York suffer from a mental illness. By educating teachers about mental health and enhancing the number of social workers and other clinicians in schools, the IDC has put forward a strong funding and policy mechanism for helping children and youth with mental health issues. We applaud the IDC for their commitment to

this educational reform.” said Glenn Liebman, CEO, Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

“With the start of the new legislative season upon us, we applaud IDC’s policy priorities which include college affordability for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, as well as additional funding for the New York Family Unity Project, that provides critical legal representation to New York’s immigrant communities. We look forward to working with the Conference on these proposals that will ensure that no New Yorker is left out of accessing a college education and increasing their potential and that no immigrant in New York is without legal representation if and when they need it,” said Steven Choi, executive director, New York Immigration Coalition.

“Benjamin Franklin said the only thing more expensive than education is ignorance. In the 18th century, he knew that education is not entitlement; it’s opportunity. That’s even more true today. The education agenda put forth by Senator Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference are the most comprehensive and best formulated proposals I have seen. Every plank is well thought through and substantive. The reform of TAP assistance, the expansion of TAP eligibility to include middle class families, measures to moderate the burdens of student debt, and measures to improved completion rates for community colleges? I hope these proposals gather the support that they deserve. They have mine,” said Charles L. Flynn, Jr., President, College of Mount Saint Vincent.

“We are very pleased that higher education and its economic benefits have become a central topic in state and national discourse,” said Lesley Massiah-Arthur, Associate Vice President of Government Relations and Urban Affairs at Fordham University. “As such, any opportunity to work with our elected leaders towards keeping New York’s private and public colleges and universities accessible for all students is especially welcome. We look forward to working with Senator Klein, the Legislature and the Governor in support of a higher educational

agenda that will expand access and opportunity for the students and families we serve."

"Bronx Community College is supportive of all efforts to increase college affordability for CUNY students. I support the investment of making a CUNY education more accessible to all New Yorkers. I look forward to working with Senator Klein and the IDC to support the successful higher education aspirations of all students," said Dr. Thomas A. Isekenegbe, President of Bronx Community College.

Changing the Way New York Houses

"The IDC's substantive policy agenda for NYCHA presents innovative ideas and potential solutions to address the backlog of repair work that must be done and how to protect public housing for future generations. NYCHA faces many hurdles in the current political climate, and therefore the State and City governments must step up to ensure residents have good living conditions and that NYCHA is transparent and accountable to tenants. I commend the IDC for putting forth this thorough policy agenda and for making public housing a top priority in the State legislature," said Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the City Council's Committee on Public Housing.

"I look forward to working with Senator Alcantara and the Independent Democratic Conference to secure funding for NYCHA to ensure that public housing is available for the next generation of working New Yorkers," said Luz Concepcion, member, Community Voices Heard; Resident-Chelsea-Elliott Houses.

"Too many seniors are at risk of losing their homes due to reverse mortgage foreclosures," said Christie Peale, Executive Director of the Center for NYC Neighborhoods.

"We applaud the IDC for proposing much-needed reforms to better protect senior homeowners from abusive practices by unethical lenders."

“Empire Justice Center is excited that the IDC is pushing thoughtful and effective ways to address the unprecedented levels of homelessness in New York State. Preventing loss of housing through evictions is a highly cost effective ways to curb homelessness. Additional funding for legal representation in housing court will have a significant impact as there simply are not enough legal services lawyers currently funded to help all those in need,” said Kristin Brown, Vice President for Policy and Government Relations for Empire Justice Center. “Similarly, the Home Stability Support (HSS) program will ensure that our public assistance programs are not so inadequate that they're pushing people out of their homes and into the shelter system, which are not only vastly more expensive, but are also incredibly hard on children and families,” said Brown. “HSS makes sense for New York and for New Yorkers, and ultimately will save money the state and localities and will keep people in their homes and in their communities.”

Changing the Way New York Works

“It is no secret that New York’s advanced manufacturing industries face a growing demand for skilled workers, and in industries where we are seeing significant growth in our State especially among small and medium sized manufacturers. Last year, we approached the IDC with this significant challenge within our critical sector, and explained that in order to foster continued growth, we needed to accommodate the growing need for skilled workers through an organized and formal apprenticeship program. The IDC listened, and through their leadership and support, we now have the MACNY Apprenticeship Program not only in place, but in demand, by employers and apprenticeships alike. With the immediate success and results we are fostering in this program, we are pleased that the IDC is supporting us in our efforts to replicate this program for other parts of the State also in need of an apprenticeship program. I would like to extend my gratitude to the IDC conference for not only listening to our concerns, but asking us for a solution, and then helping us in executing it, for the betterment of our State’s manufacturing community and New York State as a whole,” said

MACNY President & CEO Randy Wolken.

“Direct Support Professionals, special education teaching assistants and other support staff such as cooks and drivers and are not being paid a wage that they can live on. Statewide starting salaries average between \$9.62 and \$10.78. The jobs are complex and challenging and the pay is low. New York State owes these employees a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. We're grateful the members of the IDC are making this a priority for 2017,” said Richard J. Bosch, Interim Executive Director, the InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.

“Serving the 130,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities is as much a calling as it is a job. The members of the Independent Democratic Conference clearly understand the need to pay these direct support professionals a living wage and the #Fair2DirectCare coalition is extremely appreciative of their effort to do what's right for the New Yorkers we serve and the dedicated staff who work every day to make their lives better,” Steven Kroll, Executive Director of NYSARC.

“Direct care workers---responsible for administering medicine and taking care of people with developmental disabilities in emergencies---make around \$10 per hour. We want to ensure that those workers who want to stay in the field can do so, by providing them with a wage they can actually live on. For that to happen the funding must be included in the upcoming budget. Thankfully, the IDC is making this a priority for the coming session,” said Seth Stein, Executive Director and General Counsel of the Alliance of Long Island Agencies, Inc.

“Direct Support Professionals are the multi skilled individuals in each agency with a deep sense of responsibility and the genuine desire to help people live, work and thrive in our communities. It's up to all of us to make sure that DSPs are paid a living wage so they too can thrive. The IDC is showing real leadership in making #Fair2DirectCare a priority,” said

Ann Hardiman, Executive Director at New York State Association of Community & Residential Agencies.

“Since our work is 90% funded by government and we provide these services on the government's behalf, we cannot simply raise our prices to provide our workers with a living wage. If Albany doesn't step up, families in Buffalo and across our state will suffer - not only direct support professionals but the people for whom they care. We hope all our lawmakers join with the IDC and become heroes to so many New Yorkers who need their help now,” said Rhonda Frederick, President of the Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York.

“Direct support professionals are overwhelmingly minority and female. They provide life-affirming care to New Yorkers with autism, Down syndrome, serious brain injury and other developmental disabilities. They deserve a living wage and if Governor Cuomo and lawmakers don't help, we risk losing these workers to higher wages they could receive in a big box store, fast food restaurant or other retail establishment. We're thankful to the IDC for including #bFair2DirectCare in its 2017 agenda,” said Michael Seereiter, President and CEO of the New York State Rehabilitation Association.

“The IDC has always recognized the critical importance of direct care staff who work with New Yorker's with autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Most direct care workers employed by non-profit organizations providing supports and services for people with disabilities and their families have seen little or no increase in their wages for several years, due to a declining level of support from state government. We applaud the IDC's commitment to #bFair2DirectCare by including funding to assure that these dedicated professionals earn more than just the minimum wage,” said Susan Constantino, President and CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State.

“As a direct support professional, one of the greatest experiences in my life is to work with people with developmental disabilities. I can truly say I love my job. Direct support professionals are not highly paid individuals. We're respectfully asking Albany to provide the funds so we can continue to do a job we love and provide for our families. Thank you to the IDC members for making this a part of your 2017 agenda,” said Jason Marlowe, President of the Direct Support Professional Alliance of New York State.

“Our direct support professionals are part of our lives and our circles of support. They help us do what we want and need to do in our daily lives. Our direct support staff help us connect with people in our community for our work, health and social activities. They're essential to our quality of life. We're grateful the IDC has made a living wage for DSPs a priority. We know many other lawmakers agree. Now let's hope they can get it done in 2017,” said Tim Tompkins, President of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State.

Changing the Way New York Provides

“Empire Justice Center applauds the IDC for advancing initiatives that will help New York families to afford the quality child care all children deserve,” said Susan Antos, a Senior Attorney in the Albany office of Empire Justice Center. “By investing in the expansion of child care subsidies for more families, assuring that parent co-payments are affordable by capping them at 10% of household income, creating a new refundable child care tax credit and ensuring that low income families who work the night shift are eligible for child care assistance just like families who work the day shift, the IDC is laying out priorities that are in line with the everyday needs of New Yorkers. The proposed increased investment in Quality Stars will improve the quality of care provided to our youngest New Yorkers.”

“New York's families are scrambling to find child care options that meet their needs.

Without an increased investment in child care, more families will be put in a bind. UNH

applauds the IDC's proposals to invest further in child care and look forward to working with policymakers and providers throughout New York State to ensure New York's families have access to affordable child care programs that meet their needs," said Gregory Brender, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses

"QUALITYstarsNY, New York's early childhood quality rating and improvement system, is a vital and necessary resource for child care providers to deliver the high quality care that has the greatest impacts on young children. Funding of \$20 million for QUALITYstarsNY in the coming year will ensure that thousands more children and their parents will have access to high quality care, no matter what their zip code, while also providing a tracking system for maximum accountability and the effective use of public funds," said Sherry Cleary, executive director, New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, convening agency for QUALITYstarsNY.

"The Early Care & Learning Council and its network of Resource and Referral Agencies applaud the IDC for its commitment to the children and families in New York State. As the community support for both parents and child care providers we are united to promote quality and eager to work with the members of this conference on initiatives to increase access to quality child care statewide," said Jessica Klos Shapiro, Director of Policy and Community at the Early Care & Learning Council.

"We applaud Senator Klein and the members of Independent Democratic Caucus (IDC) for their thoughtful leadership to make New York more affordable for older people. We look forward to our partnership in making New York a better place to age," said Allison Nickerson, executive director of LiveOn NY.

"I want to thank Senator Klein and the members of the IDC for their continued leadership in advocating for issues impacting the everyday lives of older New Yorkers," Ann Marie Cook

president and CEO of Lifespan said. “I applaud their efforts to help continue an effective health care coordination program for older adults which has proven to save NY millions of dollars. Assisting older adults to navigate systems of care helps them stay at home and in their community. The members of the IDC continue to recognize the enormous contributions of older adults in New York State.”

“New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc. fully supports income protecting measures that would prevent New Yorkers, especially elders and the disabled, from incurring unnecessary increases in utility, rental, and heating expenses... Older New Yorkers living on fixed incomes need these programs in order to continue to live with dignity in their communities,” said Maria Alvarez, executive director of the New York StateWide Senior Action Council. She added, “Understanding that baby boomers who are turning 60 years of age are retiring with lesser resources, smaller or no pensions, and less savings, we support the Work & Save Program which would give the ability to workers to deposit money into retirement accounts even when their employers do not offer that benefit. Although we recognize that the ultimate solution would be to have better quality jobs that would offer these benefits, this program would provide a step in the right direction. As the cost of living rises in New York State and less employers offer retirement benefits to their employees, a retirement savings mechanism, is more important than ever for the working class – tomorrow’s senior citizens.”

Changing the Way New York Protects

“The foreclosure crisis continues to hold New York homeowners and municipalities in its grip. There’s always a new issue plaguing us,” said Kristen Keefe, senior attorney at Empire Justice Center. “Empire Justice is grateful that the IDC continues to take the lead in addressing emerging problems like the rising tide of reverse mortgage defaults among seniors. We also appreciate the IDC’s recognition that the Foreclosure Prevention Services

Network and the direct services it provides to distressed homeowners through housing counselling and legal services is critical to ensuring thousands of New Yorkers at risk of losing their homes will have access to an advocate after existing funding runs out in September 2017.”

“The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project protects New Yorkers who have a legal right to stay in the United States from being unjustly torn from their families and our communities. At this time when immigrants are facing the threat of mass deportations and a national anti-immigrant agenda, the support of the IDC for representation for all those in need is a critical statement that New York State values its immigrants and is willing to ensure that no New Yorkers are deported simply because they could not afford an attorney,” said Oren Root, director of the Center on Immigration and Justice at the Vera Institute of Justice.