



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Statement From Senator Patty Ritchie

PATTY RITCHIE April 10, 2017



Sunday's adoption of a new state budget takes us another step closer to making our state a better place not only for today, but also for future generations. It invests in our schools, key industries, like agriculture, infrastructure, reduces burdensome costs so small businesses can thrive and provides meaningful middle class tax relief, all while controlling spending and protecting taxpayers.

Again this year, the Senate was successful in restoring nearly \$10 million in cuts made in the Executive Budget—for a total of \$51 million in overall funding—to help grow New York's

leading industry, agriculture. This vital investment will support dozens of programs focused on marketing, education and research, among others.

With the inclusion of more than \$25 billion in school aid—which represents a year-to-year increase in overall school aid of \$1 billion—and a significant increase for Foundation Aid for school across Central and Northern New York, we are setting our state’s young people on paths of greater opportunity. Going hand in hand with this is over \$90 million in funding for libraries, along with sizeable investments for library capital projects, which will help connect more people across our state to enhanced opportunities for learning and culture.

Through the largest investment in clean water ever—totaling \$2.5 billion—we will help create stronger and healthier communities across the state. In addition, the budget also includes a significant increase of \$1.7 billion for transportation infrastructure. This regionally balanced transportation plan, which included \$65 million, for a total increase \$503 million this year and \$2.4 billion over five years for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Program(CHIPS), which will improve our local roads and bridges, create jobs and make travel safer.

With a significant boost to the maximum TAP award—which raises eligibility from \$80,000 to \$125,000—over the next three years, this plan will help ensure middle class families can afford college, regardless of where students enroll to attain a higher education.

The new budget also provides meaningful tax relief by fully funding the STAR and Enhanced STAR property tax programs, including \$47 million in additional tax relief for working families’ childcare expenses and protecting the Middle Class Income Tax Cut, which was created by the Senate last year. Also, in an effort to relieve counties of costs related to legal services for the poor, the new state budget calls for the development of a plan to cover the full cost of indigent legal defense.

The new spending plan also provides \$160 million towards two wage increases over the next two years for direct care professionals. These pay increases will help ensure these dedicated individuals receive a salary that is above minimum wage for the important work they do to support those with disabilities and their families.

As the 2017 Legislative Session continues, I am looking forward to building on this spending plan and continuing the essential work we are doing in Albany to improve the lives of people in our Central and Northern New York, and across the state.