



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Independent Democratic Conference Unveils its 'One New Yorker' Budget Agenda

JEFFREY D. KLEIN December 28, 2017

| ISSUE: **MTA FUNDING, VOTING REFORM, STATE AND LOCAL TAX DEDUCTION, HEALTH CARE, BUDGET**

Budget proposals include funding plan for MTA, election & voting reforms, state and local tax preservation and more

New York, NY — IDC Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) and the members of the **Independent Democratic Conference** today released its “One New Yorker” budget agenda to improve the lives of citizens across the state. The budget agenda covers eight areas — election reform, children, students, families, workers rights, uplifting communities, keeping citizens healthy and helping immigrants.

Signature pieces include: election and voting reforms such as early voting, no-excuse absentee voting and easier registration changes before primaries, a rider relief plan to fix the crumbling MTA, preservation of the State and Local Tax Deduction, and protecting health insurance for children.

“Whether you live in the Bronx or Buffalo, in Staten Island or Syracuse we are ‘One New Yorker,’ and this budget agenda addresses issues that collectively as one body we can advance to improve participation in our elections, enhance our children’s education, protect our workers, upgrade our infrastructure, and help our immigrant communities. As one state

we must unite around passing a budget that achieves these goals that transcend party lines,” **said Senator Klein.**

The eight sections of the “One New Yorker” budget agenda are:

The New York Voter

- Unlike 34 states, plus the District of Columbia, New York lacks any **early voting** program. The IDC proposes commencing voting 14 days of early voting ending on the Friday before Election Day.
- Believe it or not, there are only five valid excuses a New York State voter can provide in order to use an absentee ballot. Those reasons are: 1) absence from the county or NYC on election day; 2) permanent illness or physical disability; 3) primary care duties of a disabled person; 4) patient or resident of a veterans hospital; or 5) awaiting a criminal proceeding or incarcerated for a misdemeanor. The IDC wants to enact **no-excuse absentee voting**, like 27 other states and the District of Columbia.
- Voting hours for primaries in New York State are inconsistent. In some places like New York City, the polls open at 6 a.m. and close at 9 p.m., while in counties like Oneida and Onondaga and others they open at noon and close at 9 p.m. for primary day. The IDC proposal would **require all polling sites to open at 6 a.m. and close at 9 p.m.**
- Registering to vote shouldn’t be a hassle. The IDC proposes **automatic voter registration** when a person submits an application to the DMV or state agency. A person could choose to affirmatively opt out of registering to vote. The IDC also wants to encourage our youth to get ready to vote through **voter pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds**. To allow voters more time to change their registration after moving, the IDC proposes **extending voter registration deadlines** to at least 7 days before the primary, general or special election. The proposal would also allow voters to change their party registration up to 25 days before a

primary election.

The New York Child

- The IDC successfully advocated to fund free pre-k in New York City and beyond. Now, the IDC will seek a historical investment in New York City's pre-kindergarten program for three-year-olds. This program, **3K for All**, was piloted in the Bronx and Brooklyn and will branch out to all five boroughs in the 2018 school year. The City expects to invest an additional \$177 million in 2021, and the IDC will advocate for a \$177 million match to help 11,000 children attend 3-K. In order to promote quality, accountability, safety and wellbeing in these new pre-K programs, the IDC will also ensure that \$10 million is provided to QUALITYStarsNY so that all parents can have peace of mind, knowing that their child is well cared when out of their hands.

The New York Student

- New York State is facing a teacher shortage, and in order to recruit more individuals to the profession, the IDC proposes **the Student Loan Forgiveness Program to Combat Teacher Shortages in NYS**. Under the \$5 million proposal, \$5 million program eligible teachers would receive \$26,000 in loan forgiveness or the applicant's actual eligible student loan indebtedness, whichever is less. Teachers that work in shortage subject areas like STEM or ELL would receive additional student loan forgiveness, with a maximum amount of \$32,500. Awards would be paid in an amount of \$6,500 per year. Teachers who are current recipients of the federal student loan forgiveness would be eligible for additional aid above their federal award of \$17,500, with a maximum award of \$15,000 if an educator teaches in one of the recognized shortage areas. The program will be designed to maximize its effectiveness while not undermining the goal of incentivizing teachers to teach in high needs districts under the federal program, encouraging nearly 800 individuals to enter the teaching profession.

The New York Family

- To combat the tax plan recently signed into law by President Trump that only allows up to a \$10,000 deduction for state and local taxes, the IDC proposes **allowing New Yorkers to claim their full property tax deduction under state law**. The IDC also proposes the **creation of a state and local income tax deduction** to allow New Yorkers to deduct any state and local taxes that exceed the federal cap of \$10,000 from their state income taxes. Taxpayers with an income of up to \$300,000 would be eligible for the new state deduction.
- Working class New Yorkers need additional tax relief. The IDC supports **cutting the income tax rate to 0% for residents earning \$50,000 or less**. This proposal would put over \$1,000 a year into the pockets of 2.2 million city residents who need it most.

The New York Workforce

- When you work, you expect to get paid. The state must take action to protect victims of wage theft by enacting the **Securing Wages Earned Against Theft (SWEAT) bill** (#S.579/Peralta), which will help employees recoup their earnings from violators after a court or the Department of Labor Rules in their favor. This legislation would expand New York's mechanic's lien law to allow all workers the right to put a temporary lien on an employer's property when they have not been paid for their work; adopt an attachment standard to allow workers with wage theft claims to temporarily hold an employer's assets through litigation, under the supervision of a judge, if the workers show a likelihood of success on their claims; and amending the New York Business Corporation Law and Limited Liability Company Law to help workers collect wage theft judgments from the principal owners of privately held corporations.

The New York Community

- MTA riders are fed up with delays, and the IDC's **Rider Relief Plan** would fund Phase 1 of the MTA's emergency repair plan by supporting the MTA's effort to pay their half and advocating for the city to pay their half by diverting a portion of the \$7 billion in sales tax revenue New York City earns each year. The IDC also proposes keeping commuters safe by installing speed cameras in every school zone -- public, private, parochial, and charter. This program is meant to deter vehicles from speeding, and fines would be dedicated back into mass transit. First, the IDC would advocate to freeze the fare for all riders, next to implement a Fair Fares program to offer discounted MetroCards to individuals whose earnings are under the Federal Poverty Level; and lastly, we would advocate to cut the \$6.50 Express Bus fare by up to half.
- The IDC wants to build upon the Zombie Property Law of 2016, by equally applying the same principles to bank-owned properties. In a recent investigative report, IDC analysts discovered bank-owned homes were not being maintained, though they had the duty to maintain the properties upon foreclosure. The IDC proposes **Good Neighbor Legislation** adding these properties to the Department of Financial Services registry for better tracking, imposing up to \$500 a day fines which zombie properties are subject to for failure to maintain, and funding DFS to enforce the law.
- NYCHA has failed its tenants time and time again. Most recently a lead paint scandal left our children at risk, after it was revealed that NYCHA failed to comply with the law. The IDC is calling for an **Independent Monitor to oversee NYCHA**.

The Healthy New Yorker

- Though the federal government extended CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) funding, this vital money that ensures children whose parents do not qualify for Medicaid, but who have modest incomes, are insured. This program, created in 1997 with bipartisan support, can expire leaving 630,000 New York children uninsured. The IDC

proposes **funding CHIP on a state level with \$1.3 billion to protect our children.**

The New New Yorker

- Last year the IDC successfully secured \$10 million for a historic immigrant legal services fund to protect the American Dream — the single largest legal aid fund in our state’s history. This \$10 million investment in legal defense will deliver qualified public defenders that are well versed in the intricacies of immigration law to every New Yorker facing deportation, helping tens of thousands of immigrants and creating an actual, not symbolic, sanctuary for them in New York State. It will also fund efforts to help immigrants reunite legally with their families, apply for green cards, and prepare for citizenship exams, among other initiatives. The IDC wants to ensure that this initial \$10 million will be disbursed and spent fully to ensure that immigrants receive the legal assistance they need. The members of the IDC also believe that this \$10 million was only a start, and that the state needs to **continue to invest in these services by setting aside \$10 million in the 2018-19 budget for these services.**

The full budget agenda is attached.

“The IDC’s One New Yorker budget agenda focuses on several issues that my constituents have told me are important to them: education, tax relief, and voting reforms. As we start a new legislative session in 2018, my highest priority will be to continue to serve my constituents and work to enact policies that address their concerns,” **said IDC Deputy Leader David Valesky (D-Syracuse).**

“Our 'One New Yorker' plan sets out to achieve a common agenda for everyone: creating a better New York and quality of life for all. This budget agenda will help the constituents of all Senators, from every corner of this great state with a great opportunity to make New York a more inclusive, affordable, and prosperous place to live,” **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 Full Day Kindergarten and Pre-K programs to reforming the property tax system to make New York more affordable, the IDC One New Yorker Agenda represents a comprehensive plan to help the families of NY grow and thrive in the future,” **said Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland)**.

“Our legislative priorities this upcoming session show, once again, the IDC’s commitment to investing in every single New Yorker. Our commitment to improving the lives, opportunities, and communities of our fellow New Yorkers no matter their backgrounds or ambitions shines through in the ‘One New Yorker’ agenda. It is clear, this session the IDC will invest in the people of 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)**.

“As the state Senate session gears up, I am excited to continue to deliver for all New York residents, building on the commonsense policy achievements of the Independent Democratic Conference and fighting for the interests of New Yorkers dealing with the consequences of the short sighted policy coming from Washington. As an immigrant woman of color, I am especially passionate about our conference’s policies that will bring justice for victims of wage theft, undocumented people seeking legal representation, and New Yorkers who are victims of voter suppression and overly restrictive voting laws,” **said Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan)**.

“These proposals present important steps forward for jump starting education for our children, with 3K for All, for encouraging broad civic participation, with voter registration and election day reforms, for giving commuters greater peace of mind, with concerted action to tackle MTA challenges, for adjusting tax policy in the face of destructive actions from Washington, and for offering many more concrete solutions to challenges. This ‘One New Yorker’ Budget Agenda furthers meaningful change and I am proud to stand with my

colleagues in support of everyday New Yorkers. Parents immigrants, straphangers, neighbors, the experiences of all New Yorkers inform this One New Yorker Agenda reflecting the thoughtful, inclusive policy our communities need,” **said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn).**

“As we are facing a critical moment in our city and in our state, it is vital that we keep on delivering to those affected the most by Washington. As the new legislative session is about to begin, my colleagues and I will fight tirelessly to enact my DREAM Act, to pass women’s rights legislation, to protect tenants and immigrants, and to ensure we have a stronger and solid hard-working class,” **said Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens).**

Unions, advocacy groups and think tanks praised the IDC’s “One New York” budget agenda.

The New York Voter

“We need to empower voters to get to the polls and make a choice about government. I thank Senator Jeff Klein and the members of the IDC for proposing early voting, automatic voter registration, and no excuse absentee voting, among other reforms, to give disenfranchised individuals a real voice in their leaders and to get all citizens excited about voting,” **said Kirsten John Foy, Northeast Regional Director of National Action Network.**

“New York State remains far behind other states in the union when it comes to modernizing how we vote, and now is the time to launch these must-needed voting reforms. We must do everything we can to ensure that New York voters of all backgrounds can participate in the critical 2018 State and Federal elections. Early voting, automatic voter registration, and no excuse absentee voting are among the reform that we believe, based on our experience, will empower voters in New York and across the nation as they strive to exercise their civil rights. Since its inception, Dominicanos USA has remained dedicated to advancing non-partisan civic engagement among Dominican-Americans and Latinos and, in turn,

strengthening American democracy," **said Eddie Cuesta, Executive Director, Dominicanos USA.**

The New York Child & New York Student

"New York faces a looming teacher shortage. The IDC's proposed loan forgiveness program would attract bright young people into the profession – and keep them in New York – by helping to lower one of the biggest barriers to entering the classroom, and that's student loan debt," **said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.** "In addition, NYSUT also appreciates the IDC's proposed new investments in full-day kindergarten and after-school programs. The IDC's proposed pilot program to assist English language learners is innovative and smart. Providing a strong foundation for all students through smaller class sizes, quality early-education and after-school programs can only help to raise achievement in the long term."

"Right now too many of our schools struggle to find enough certified teachers to meet the needs of the growing numbers of English language learners. We support the IDC's proposal for a pilot program to increase both the number of certified ELL teachers and the professional support these educators receive. We also support the IDC's proposed teacher loan forgiveness program. In New York City, too many teachers leave before they hit their fifth-year in the classroom. The IDC is building on a successful model -- a similar incentive for licensed social workers -- that will encourage teachers to teach in high-need districts and recognized shortage areas," **said Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers**

"Access to quality, affordable child care is an ongoing struggle for families all across New York. Last year's \$2.5 million cut to the Advantage After School Program put more than 1,800 students across the state at risk of losing access to afterschool programs. Funding for Advantage After School must be restored to \$22.3 million to preserve this critical source of safe, supportive care in low-income communities, while expanding new Empire State After-School programs in targeted districts. We support the IDC's budget proposals to enhance and

enrich expanded learning opportunities that are proven to support student success. In addition to extending STEM opportunities to youth through afterschool programs, it is important that we use technology to collect data about the availability and outcomes of expanded learning opportunities in our communities. With more than 1.1 million students still in need of afterschool programs in New York, this valuable technical assistance will help to ensure that we are maximizing our investments and the availability of quality care,” **said Kelly Sturgis, Executive Director New York State Network for Youth Success**

“Making resources available to ensure that districts throughout the state can provide full day kindergarten and prekindergarten is a priority for school boards,” **said NYSSBA Executive Director Timothy G. Kremer**. “NYSSBA looks forward to working with the IDC to ensure that these programs, as well as their proposals to better fund services for English language learners and expand after school program in 2018 are enacted.”

“New York’s commitment to early childhood education is only as good as its commitment to building quality programs. As Pre-K seats are added across the state, the organizations and schools housing them must be equipped with skilled educators, foundational support, and the resources necessary for stimulating the minds of New York’s youngest learners. Whether it’s a classroom in New York City or one in North Country, parents need to know their children are given the same high quality care during the most critical time of their development. I commend the IDC for recognizing the importance of having both access and quality in early care and education, and for reflecting that priority in their 2018 policy proposal,” **said Helga Yuan Larsen, Director of QUALITYstarsNY**.

“In the knowledge economy, one of the most important tickets to career success is a high quality college diploma, and everything we can do to support student completion contributes to greater prosperity in our communities,” **said James B. Milliken, the Chancellor of The City University of New York**. “Encouraging more students to become teachers, assisting

students in getting valuable degrees and making these steps affordable delivers enormous returns that benefit generations of New Yorkers.”

“The State University of New York enrolls more than 1.3 million students in a given year and we aim to do all we can to ensure that they complete their SUNY degree and graduate in a position to pay off any student loan debt they may have incurred,” **said SUNY Chancellor Kristina M. Johnson.** “I look forward to learning more about the IDC’s legislative proposals for 2018-19 and how they may benefit SUNY students.”

“We support and encourage efforts to alleviate the burdensome debt on the shoulders of students and families,” **said Marc Cohen, President of the Student Assembly of the State University of New York.** “We hope to see initiatives like the Teacher Student Loan Forgiveness Program enacted into law, and look forward to working with Senator Klein, the Independent Democratic Conference and legislative leaders in both chambers to continue supporting the students of the State University of New York.”

“We applaud Senator Jeffrey Klein’s leadership on efforts to improve college access and affordability for New York’s students,” **said Marc M. Jerome, President of Monroe College in the Bronx and New Rochelle.** “These recently announced ideas to address complex student debt issues are compelling, as is the continued broader work to ensure all students remain well-served by higher ed policy in Albany.”

“We commend the Independent Democratic Conference on its student-focused higher education agenda” **said Mary Beth Labate, president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities.** “Every state dollar invested in helping students is an investment in New York’s future. New York’s private, not-for-profit colleges and universities provide 87 percent of the grant aid their students receive, totaling \$5.4 billion annually. Additional state help for students, as proposed by the IDC, will enable more people to pursue their college dreams at

the college or university that best meets their needs and goals. We thank the IDC for their commitment to thoughtful proposals that make college more affordable for all students.”

“Bronx Community College is supportive of all efforts to decrease student debt 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.**

“Member institutions of the Association of Proprietary Colleges (APC) are committed to keeping student loan debt low, academic achievement high and the pipeline to employment a priority. The NYS Student Loan Interest Deduction and College Debt Freedom Account Pilot programs will lessen the burden of student loan debt for all New York graduates and open the doors of opportunity for economic growth. The IDC’s higher education policy agenda for 2018 is in line with APC’s priorities and we strongly support these proposed initiatives,” **said Donna Gurnett, Executive Director of the Association of Proprietary Colleges.**

“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.”

“New York communities with average income under \$50,000 owe a cumulative \$35 billion in student loan debt and represent nearly half of the state’s student loan borrowers. We applaud Senator Klein and the IDC for drawing attention to this pressing economic justice

issue for working families and first-generation college students and look forward to working together on solutions in the coming year,” **said Ian Rosenblum, Executive Director, The Education Trust–New York.**

The New York Family

Enhancing and Expanding SCHE/DHE

“The Senior Citizen Homeowner (SCHE) and Disabled Homeowner Exemption (DHE) programs are important ways to allow older New Yorkers to continue to afford their homes and remain in their communities. Expanding the income thresholds statewide would mean hundreds of thousands of seniors and individuals with disabilities would feel more secure in their homes, without having to make the difficult daily choices between paying for housing, medical expenses, food and utilities. Access to affordable housing is crucial as we work together to make New York a better place to age.” **said Allison Nickerson, Executive Director, LiveOn NY.**

The New York Workforce

Protecting Bargaining Rights

“This legislation comes at a critical time. Organized Labor is increasingly under attack by those who want to diminish the rights of working men and women. We thank Senator Jeff Klein and Senate Labor Chair Marisol Alcantara for supporting working men and women and recognizing the importance of protecting worker rights, including the right to join a union,” **said Mario Cilento, president of the New York State AFL-CIO.**

Work and Save

“The time to help the more than 3.5 million New Yorkers who have no way to save for retirement at work is long overdue. We applaud Senator Klein and the Independent Democratic Conference for making it a priority to pass Secure Choice next year.

“Governor Cuomo acknowledged nearly two years ago that New Yorkers’ lack of retirement savings is part of a national crisis. Fewer companies are offering retirement savings options such as pensions and 401(k)s that previous generations took for granted – leaving more than half New York’s private-sector workforce without access.

“We need this voluntary, low- to no-cost, state-facilitated vehicle that allows employers to offer their employees a proven, effective retirement savings option – which will also benefit taxpayers by lessening future demands for public assistance and many small businesses that would like to offer this valuable employee benefit but can’t afford to do so on their own,” **said Beth Finkel, AARP New York State Director**

SWEAT

“Passage of the SWEAT bill will finally give workers a real mechanism to recover lost wages. As strong as our wage theft laws are in New York State, they bring little solace to workers who may win a judgement in court, but still never get paid because the employer secretly transfers their assets elsewhere. This is a prevalent phenomenon in the RWDSU’s industries, particularly in car washes. New York State needs to give workers a stronger legal means to secure their stolen wages. SWEAT should be one of the top issues for our state legislature this year,” **said Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU).**

“We are heartened that the IDC is making the SWEAT (Securing Wages Earned Against Theft), bill #S.0579 a policy priority! The SWEAT bill is key to stemming the epidemic of wage theft in New York State. Estimated at more than \$50 billion a year for low-wage workers alone, the scourge of wage theft hurts working people, law-abiding businesses, and New York State's economy. Workers are robbed of their wages. Our government is cheated of payroll taxes. Legitimate businesses are undermined by scofflaw employers. Given our state's deficit, the struggles of working families and small businesses, we call on all of our state

representatives to unite in putting an end to wage theft this year,” said **JoAnn Lum, National Mobilization Against SweatShops, and the SWEAT Coalition.**

“Low wage workers, most often victims of wage theft, already have a hard enough time making ends meet in regards to rent, food, healthcare, if lucky enough to have it. When workers are not paid for work performed, it is not just wage theft, it is immoral. We need for the loopholes that unscrupulous employees exploit to be closed and a worker to be paid for work performed,” said **Susan Zimet, Executive Director, Hunger Action Network of NYS.**

“Over a billion dollars of wage theft occurs every year in New York State, and it affects upstate and downstate, in industries as diverse as construction, agriculture, home health care, restaurants – basically you name it, and wage theft is there,” said **Eòghann Renfroe, Policy Coordinator for Empire Justice Center.** “The loopholes in current law that allow this epidemic of wage theft hurt hard working employees who deserve to be paid for their work, but they also hurt honest businesses who are forced to compete with these bad faith actors who cheat their workers, line their own pockets, and give themselves an unfair advantage in the marketplace. Empire Justice Center looks forward to working with Senator Peralta to make sure this essential bill becomes law in 2018.”

MIAP

“Last year, the IDC was instrumental in working with us and supporting the creation and execution of a formal apprenticeship program. From its inception two year ago as a pilot program in Central New York, the results and demand of the Apprenticeship program has already far surpassed everyone’s expectations, expanded into four geographic areas, and continues to flourish and provide much needed workforce solutions. I would like to extend our continued gratitude to the IDC conference for not only listening to our concerns, but asking us for a solution, providing us with the means to create it, continuing to support it, and now encouraging the continued expansion of it to a Statewide geographic footprint to

benefit as many manufacturers as possible,” **said MACNY President & CEO Randy Wolken.**

The New York Community

Dilapidated Properties

“As an organization dedicated to preserving New York communities, Mobilization for Justice applauds the Senate for examining the detrimental impact on New York communities caused by the failure of financial institutions to maintain the properties they hold,” **said Linda Jun, senior staff attorney at Mobilization for Justice.** “To advance the stability of New York neighborhoods and protect them from harm, there must be greater accountability for these financial institutions. Mobilization for Justice strongly supports the IDC’s recommendations to increase registration, penalties, inspections, and enforcement to ensure that financial institutions no longer allow their properties to fall into disrepair.”

“Vacant, neglected, and abandoned homes are a blight on neighborhoods throughout New York. For families who live near them, the presence of 'nightmare neighbors' is a daily reminder of the significant and lingering effects of the foreclosure crisis. We applaud the members of the IDC for calling attention to this critical issue and we urge the State Legislature to strengthen and extend monitoring and enforcement measures that will help communities mitigate the impact of these abandoned properties,” **said Christie Peale, Executive Director of the Center for NYC Neighborhoods.**

“Senator Klein has been a true champion for communities, first pushing banks to maintain foreclosed properties, then adding requirements that they maintain vacant and abandoned properties. The IDC’s proposal to address the ongoing problem of dilapidated properties goes to the next step by adding much-needed resources for enforcement of the law by the NYS Department of Financial Resources, and giving municipalities real authority to enforce,”

said Kirsten Keefe, Senior Attorney at Empire Justice Center.

NYCHA Independent Monitor

“As a long-term NYCHA resident I believe that the way to ensure that public housing is available for the next generation of New Yorkers is to have transparency. An independent monitor who is accountable to NYCHA residents is needed and we support IDC's efforts in this regard,” **said Agnes Rivera, resident Wagner Houses. Member Community Voices Heard.**

Rider Relief Plan

“The IDC’s new plan-particularly the diversion of the City’s sales tax- is a great idea and will provide the immediate relief New Yorkers need,” **said Tony Utano, President of Transit Workers Union, Local 100.**

“Community Service Society (CSS) research found that one in four low-income New Yorkers often struggle with the cost of bus and subway fares. Making our public transit system more affordable, especially for those who rely on it the most, is crucial for advancing upward mobility. Since CSS joined with Riders Alliance and other advocates to announce the “Fair Fares” campaign, several proposals have been introduced to fund a reduced fare program from using general city revenues, to an increase in the Millionaire’s tax, or using a portion of the revenues generated from congestion pricing. All are good ideas. We applaud the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) for putting forward its own proposal to fund a “Fair Fares” program, and making it a top priority in its budget agenda. The Rider Relief Plan calls for expanding speed enforcement cameras in school zones as a safety measure, and using the revenues from tickets to subsidize half-price MTA fares for the working poor. The IDC proposal rightly recognizes that we need to address transit affordability and take progressive steps to make sure our public transportation system is a gateway to economic opportunity, not a barrier to it,” **said Jeffrey N. Maclin, Vice President for Governmental and**

Public Relations, Community Service Society.

Land Bank Funding

“Land Banks are a proven solution for strengthening communities, revitalizing neighborhoods, supporting local economic development, creating more affordable housing and protecting the environment. Here in New York, our 23 land banks have made nationally recognized progress and exceeded even the most ambitious expectations. To continue building value from blight and returning property to the tax rolls in every corner of New York State, the requested support is vital,” **said Madeline Fletcher, Executive Director, Newburgh Community Land Bank and Secretary of the New York State Land Bank Association.**

Home Stability Support

“Thousands of New Yorkers struggle with the far ranging impact of domestic violence, housing instability, and homelessness. The Home Stability Support program will address these serious and often dangerous issues by ensuring that survivors of domestic violence and their children are not left homeless as they strive to move on with their lives. We urge the state to adopt HSS which is critical for so many survivors across our state,” **said Connie Neal, Executive Director of the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

“Empire Justice Center deeply appreciates the support of the IDC for the Home Stability Support initiative,” **said Don Friedman, Managing Attorney of Empire Justice Center’s Long Island Office.** “On Long Island, people receiving public assistance must pay rents that are not only more than the welfare allowance, but that are often double the allowance. The cost of providing emergency shelter on Long Island for a family of three averages about \$3,300 a month. By contrast, the cost of the HSS rent supplement would be less than half that amount, and would enable the family to avoid homelessness and to retain safe and decent housing. In addition, under HSS, families might be eligible for an allowance to meet the cost of heating their homes, in contrast to the current allowance, which hasn’t changed in 30

years. We look forward to working with all players to enact HSS this year.”

“We thank Sen. Klein and Assemblymember Hevesi for advancing the game changing Home Stability Support proposal (A.8178), which will help tens of thousands of at-risk New Yorkers keep their homes in the years to come, and is the one plan that would begin to alleviate record levels of homelessness. For every tax dollar we spend on homelessness prevention, many more are saved in the costs of shelters, jails, and hospitals – not to mention the enormous emotional toll that homelessness takes on tens of thousands of children and families each year. 2018 is the year to finally come together for real solutions to homelessness, and we call on all Albany leaders to support this groundbreaking proposal.”

Statement of Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Coalition for the Homeless

The Healthy New Yorker

Doctors Across New York

“The Doctors Across New York program is essential to recruiting and retaining doctors in shortage areas across New York State, especially in our Upstate region. These professionals serve some of the state’s most vulnerable populations and are needed to provide primary, specialty, and emergency care. Further funding for this program will attract more doctors to areas of the state suffering from dangerous physician shortages,” **said Gary J. Fitzgerald, President, Iroquois Healthcare Association.**

Take a Look

“Workforce shortages in healthcare across Upstate New York are on the edge of becoming a widespread crisis. These shortages compromise community access to healthcare, threaten our ability to effectively manage emerging trends in healthcare delivery and payment systems (such as value-based payments), and have the ability to collapse entire Upstate economies. The Iroquois Healthcare Association (IHA) has developed a unique program to

address these shortages directly. The IHA *'Take A Look'* program allows healthcare professionals who have never been to Upstate New York to see firsthand the many benefits of practicing medicine here by providing medical students, physician residents, and nurse practitioners with three days of personal tours at Upstate New York hospitals, federally qualified health centers and medical clinics. It's a tremendous opportunity to showcase Upstate New York as a great place for healthcare professionals to work and live," **said Gary J. Fitzgerald, President, Iroquois Healthcare Association.**

"An adequate supply of physicians in all communities throughout New York State is the best way to ensure access to care, especially primary care. Such access limits avoidable ER admissions and helps New Yorkers with chronic illnesses better manage their diseases. One physician specialty, however, remains woefully inadequate in all regions of the state – psychiatry. Expanding current physician recruitment and retention programs makes sound sense," **said Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Suburban Hospital Alliance of New York State.**

The New New Yorkers

Immigrant Services Funding

"Thanks to the exemplary leadership of Senator Klein and the IDC, as of the current fiscal year, New York is the first state in the nation to provide a lawyer for every immigrant in the state who is detained and facing deportation and who is unable to afford a private lawyer," **said Oren Root, Director of the Center on Immigration and Justice at the Vera Institute of Justice.**

"It is of critical importance that this funding which keeps New York immigrant families intact be included in the 2018-19 budget. Indeed, it is imperative that this historic achievement be continued in the upcoming budget."

"The dismantling of protections at the federal level is an attack on fellow New Yorkers and it continues to tear families apart, separate friends and coworkers, and destabilize entire

communities. Empire Justice Center applauds the IDC for working with the Governor to allocate funding last year to provide legal services to help immigrants uphold their basic civil and human rights as they face persecution from the federal government. We appreciate the IDC's commitment to allocating an additional \$10 million in funding for this purpose in the 2018-19 budget," **said Kristin Brown, VP for Policy and Government Relations at Empire Justice Center.**

"We salute the IDC for standing with the immigrant community. Through increased funding to provide quality legal representation that unites families; implementing a DREAM Act which will allow students in our state to participate in the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP); along with new housing incentives for recent immigrants, demonstrates a commitment which should be a model for our nation," **said Angela Fernandez, Esq., Executive Director of Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights.**

"New York State should set the example for how we should defend and uplift our nation's immigrants," **said José Calderón, President of Hispanic Federation.** "Watching Congress play politics with the lives of Dreamers has been maddening, and underscores how important state leadership will be to protect our immigrant youth. The time is now for New York State to finally pass a Dream Act that ensures that our Dreamers can access tuition assistance and scholarships to attend college. On behalf of the tens of thousands of undocumented New Yorkers that graduate from our high schools and dream of pursuing a higher education, we thank State Senator Peralta for championing this bill and we urge the passage of the New York State Dream Act once and for all."

"As the Trump administration and its Justice Department pursue their ruthless anti-immigrant agenda, every immigrant facing deportation needs legal representation. This proposal for a \$10 million increase in immigration legal services is a critical step forward for immigrant New Yorkers. In a time of heightened need for services, the state must step up in

providing opportunity and justice for all,” said **Steven Choi, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition.**