



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Advancing New York Values & Protecting Taxpayers

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS April 1, 2019

| ISSUE: **NYS BUDGET**

Albany, NY- The Senate Majority passed the 2019-2020 State Budget that provides tax relief for overburdened New York families by implementing a permanent property tax cap, increases support for New York students by investing over \$1 billion more in state education aid, and cuts taxes for middle-class New Yorkers. The enacted budget reflects a responsible financial plan that is within the available revenues provided by State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli and remains within the 2% state spending cap. The budget also includes historic action to reform the state's justice system, implement the Affordable Care Act into state law, advance a public financing system, and invest in environmental protection efforts and ban single-use plastic bags. All of these accomplishments were achieved despite lower anticipated state revenues due to efforts by the Trump Administration to attack New York State finances.

"The Senate Majority committed to passing a responsible, effective, and on-time State Budget, and that is what we have achieved. I thank my partner in legislative leadership, Speaker Heastie, as well as Governor Cuomo, and all of my colleagues in the Senate Majority to their hard work and dedication throughout the budget process," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. "The 2019-2020 State Budget will provide an over \$1 billion increase in education aid, with a focus on struggling school districts. The budget will also

provide essential AIM funds for local governments, a permanent property tax cap, and tax relief for Middle Class New Yorkers. Additionally, we have taken historic steps to implement a public financing system, reform our criminal justice system, and ban single-use plastic bags. Our first budget as the Senate Majority will help move New York forward and build a stronger, fairer, more prosperous, and cleaner state for generations to come.”

Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Our New York Senate is responsible for the most historic and dramatic reforms to our troubled criminal justice system, including realizing the bail reform many of us sought for years. This budget also makes substantial down payments on the promise of a more progressive future, though our efforts are only beginning, as we must keep working to ensure the enactment of a robust public financing program and full funding to provide a sound basic education for our children. I look forward to keeping up the fight on these and other issues.”

Senate Finance Chair Liz Krueger said, “I am very proud that in my first year as Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, under the leadership of Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and working closely with so many dedicated colleagues in the Majority Conference, we have delivered an on-time budget that is fiscally responsible and addresses the needs of New Yorkers in every part of our state. Our conference engaged in a historically transparent and democratic process, with hearings all across the state, and full participation and input from every senator. All budgets are the product of compromises, and they are never perfect. But this budget represents a significant step in the right direction on a wide variety of issues, and demonstrates our commitment to the entire state and to investing in New York's most valuable resource - our people. I look forward, together with my colleagues, to continuing to grasp this historic chance to build a New York where opportunity and prosperity are shared by all New Yorkers.”

### **Improving Educational Opportunities**

The Senate Majority understands that education is the great equalizer and that all New York students deserve access to a high quality education no matter their zip code. The enacted budget provides the largest amount of school aid in state history by providing an over \$1 billion increase to public education investment across New York State. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Increasing School Aid by over \$1 billion, or 3.8%, over the 2018-2019 school year.
- Increasing Foundation Aid by \$618 million, or 3.5%, over the 2018-2019 school year.
  - o This investment brings the total state education funding to \$27.9 billion, and allocates over 70% of funds to high need school districts.
- Providing \$342 million to fully fund expense –based aid and allows flexibility for Community Schools Foundation Aid Set-Aside funding.
- Providing \$849 million for expanded pre-kindergarten grants, \$15 million increase to provide programs for three- and four-year olds.
- Extends mayoral accountability of New York City schools for three years, and includes reforms to enhance transparency and parental/community input in New York City school governance.
- Authorizes “piggyback contracts” for transportation in education by cutting the red tape that prevented school districts from working together to save money.
- Providing \$34.4 million for school lunch programs and a \$9 million increase to expand early college high schools.

### **Providing Real Tax Relief And Support To Local Communities**

New York State residents and businesses struggle with high taxes, and local government rely on state support to provide essential services. The Senate Majority is committed to providing tax relief and support to local communities and families. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Implementing a permanent property tax cap, which was already passed by the Senate Democratic Majority this Legislative Session, is projected to save taxpayers \$189.9 billion over the next 10 years.
- Allocating \$715 million of Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding to certain Towns and Villages within the AIM program and adding additional state funds to several in-need local governments.

### **Restoring Trust In State Government And Reforming The Electoral System**

On the first full day of the 2019 Legislative Session, the Senate Majority passed historic pro-voter bills and electoral system reforms. The Senate Majority worked to continue those efforts through the State Budget process and achieved reforms to help restore the voters' trust in state government. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Allocating \$10 million in funding for early voting and \$14.5 million in funding for e-poll books.
- A public financing commission with binding power to implement public campaign financing for legislative and statewide offices.
  - o Findings are due December 1, 2019 and will be binding unless modified by law within 20 days.
- Expanding upstate voting hours to begin at 6:00 AM and end at 9:00 PM, to ensure all New Yorkers have uniform voting hours.

- Protecting grassroots and volunteer-run organizations from being forced to register as lobbyists.
- Requiring three hours of paid time off so New Yorkers will be better able to vote on Election Day.

### **Supporting New York Businesses**

The Senate Majority supports investment to assist New York businesses to grow, create jobs and be successful throughout the state. It is especially committed to encouraging the continued growth of Minority and Women Owned businesses. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Allocating \$365,000 for the Minority and Women Owned Business Development and Lending Program.
- Investing \$4 million for the Workforce Development Institute.
- Major investments to steer state and local resources to community banks and credit unions, which will help provide additional lending access to underserved communities.

### **Reforming New York's Justice System:**

The Senate Majority is committed to a fairer state justice system and the enacted budget includes long-called for reforms to make New York State fairer and more just. The enacted budget includes:

- Reforming Bail and Pretrial Detention: The enacted budget will eliminate cash bail for misdemeanors and non-violent felonies and ensure that no New Yorker is incarcerated because of their inability to pay. Additionally, law enforcement officials will be required to issue a desk appearance ticket to most people charged with misdemeanors and Class E

felonies.

- Ensuring the Right to a Speedy Trial: The enacted budget will ensure that defendants do not sit in jail waiting for a trial while dates keep getting postponed by requiring that misdemeanors are resolved within 90 days and felonies within 180 days. The enacted budget includes legislation that requires courts to take a proactive role in advising litigants on how time will be charged and inquire into the government's readiness to proceed to trial and require the government to file all suitable paperwork before statement of readiness is accepted.
- Transforming the Discovery Process: The enacted budget includes reforms that will overall New York's discovery process to require that both prosecutors and defendants share all information in their possession well in advance of trial. This legislation will also ensure that both victims and witnesses are protected from intimidation and other forms of coercion by providing prosecutors the ability to petition a court for a protective order.

### **Investing In Mass Transit And Supporting Transportation Mobility**

The Senate Majority is committed to smart investments in New York State's mass transit infrastructure. This includes addressing the MTA and specific regional needs across the state. The enacted State Budget includes:

- A traffic mobility plan that treats drivers fairly, reduces peak-hour congestion, incentivizes efficient commercial vehicle and business travel, and dedicates revenues equitably.
- Providing dedicated revenue streams for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to receive \$25 billion in capital assistance.

- Allocating \$438 million in Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funding.

### **Improving Health Care For New Yorkers**

Quality health care is a basic right that all New Yorkers deserve access to. The Senate Majority understands this fact and offered multiple proposals to ensure the State Budget provides essential funds for New Yorker's health care needs and essential medical care providers. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Implementing the federal Affordable Care Act and the New York Health Care Exchange into State law
- Investing \$100 million in OASAS to better confront the opioid abuse crisis.
- Requiring health insurance companies to increase the length of time available for New Yorkers seeking in-patient treatment for substance abuse disorders.
- Providing over \$3.8 million for School Based Health Clinics.
- Investing significant state funds for research and programs to combat diseases including Sickle Cell, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Lupus.

### **Protecting New York's Environment And Natural Resources**

The Senate Majority supports efforts to protect New York State's environment and natural resources. With a federal government run by climate change deniers, the Senate Majority will work to have New York State serve as a national and international leader in the fight against climate change. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Banning single-use plastic bags and empowering counties and cities to opt into a 5-cent fee on paper bags, with 40 percent of the generated revenue going to local efforts to provide reusable bags for low and fixed-income consumers, and 60 percent of the generated revenue going to the State's Environmental Protection Fund.

- Allocating an additional \$500 million, for a total of \$3 billion, for clean water infrastructure projects such as improvements to solid waste management facilities, inter-municipal infrastructure projects, projects to address emerging contaminants, water quality improvement projects, concentrated animal feeding operations, septic system replacement, and projects to address issues on Long Island.

### **Boosting New York State Agriculture**

The Senate Majority is committed to investing in New York State's agriculture industry, which is an important economic driver in regions across New York State. The enacted State Budget includes:

- Major investments for agriculture programs including \$750,000 for Farm-to-School programs, \$842,000 for the Future Farmers of America, \$872,000 for the FarmNet program which provides assistance to farming families, and \$750,000 for the Apple Growers Association.

- Allocating over \$1 million for the NY Wine & Grape Foundation.

### **Empowering New Yorkers To Stay In Their Homes**

The Senate Majority is committed to access to affordable housing for New Yorkers and protecting them from housing discrimination. The enacted State Budget includes:



- Implementing the Lawful Source of Income Non-Discrimination Act of 2019 to fight housing discrimination.
  - o New Yorkers who receive some form of lawful non-wage income or subsidies will now be protected against discrimination in housing including: domestic violence survivors, veterans, elderly, and disabled individuals.
- Delivering relief for Nassau County homeowners by approving a five year phase-in of impacts related to the recently completed county-wide reassessment.
- Increasing funding for the Tenant Protection Unit to \$5.5 million, a 22% increase over the current year.
- Investing \$20 million in foreclosure prevention services to help New Yorkers stay in their homes.