



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## State Senator Gustavo Rivera on the 2020-2021 New York State Budget

GUSTAVO RIVERA April 3, 2020

| ISSUE: **2020-2021 STATE BUDGET**

### **BUDGET OVERVIEW**

"Plainly stated, this year's budget proved to be the most difficult in my ten years as a legislator. While I've always acknowledged the reality of Governor Cuomo's enormous power in the budget process, this year was a particularly bitter pill to swallow. It would be unfair not to acknowledge that the legislature worked within the strict framework he imposed and was able to make important changes to his original proposals. Ultimately, the Governor's relentless and incomprehensible pursuit of an austere budget was successful.

This budget cycle was rough from the start, with a mounting deficit that was only exacerbated by the pandemic we are facing. The Governor insisted that the solution to our state's economic challenges was to gut critical programs New Yorkers rely on, instead of increasing taxes to New York's billionaires and multi-millionaires as a way to generate revenue that would have lessened the blow for the rest of us.

Again, the Senate Majority, under the leadership of Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins,

was able to push back on some of the most detrimental cuts and policies, while delivering some much-needed relief and resources for New Yorkers. But in the final analysis, there were far too many budget proposals that I could not support."

## **HEALTH**

"The main component of the Governor's proposed budget was the gargantuan cuts to the Medicaid program. These proposals fundamentally threatened a critical health care program that covers 1 in 3 New Yorkers and only offered harsh austerity for the poorest and most vulnerable in our state.

While this budget adopted several of the Governor's misconceived proposals, the Senate Majority was able to successfully fight back against the most dangerous cuts to our safety net hospitals, long term care facilities, and community health centers. For example, we provided a new funding pool to help financially distressed general hospitals and nursing homes continue to have the resources they need to care for New Yorkers. We were also able to preserve some important protections for those who rely on Medicaid's long term care services and their spouses.

An important victory was the inclusion of a section of my Insulin for All bill (S.6492A) that will cap the out-of-pocket cost insurers can charge for insulin drugs at \$100 per 30-day supply. This will help ensure diabetic New Yorkers don't have to ration this life-saving medication due to skyrocketing prices, especially during these trying times."

## **THE BRONX**

"It is no secret that the Bronx has consistently ranked as the county with the worst health outcomes in New York State. This budget includes a pilot program that brings all Bronx hospitals together under an all-payer global budget. It will allow flexibility and accelerate the integration of inpatient to outpatient services throughout our borough thereby hopefully improving the health outcomes of all Bronxites.

Once again, I secured hundreds of thousands of dollars for organizations in the 33rd Senate District that focus on seniors, women's health issues, legal services, and drug, violence, and crime control. These funds will go directly to providing important resources and services to my constituents."

### **PUBLIC FINANCE SYSTEM**

"This budget also established the implementation of a public finance system for our state elections. This is a measure I have been fighting for since I was elected to the Senate in 2010. A statewide public financing system will strengthen the public's trust in our government and elections by removing any doubt about big money and special interests influencing our representation. However, this section of the budget also included new mandates for minor parties, like the Working Families Party, that seriously threaten their ability to survive. This last minute addition further demonstrates how the Governor utilizes a crisis to benefit himself politically, over the interests of our State."

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

"What we achieved last year in reforming our criminal justice system was nothing short of historic. That's why I find it inconceivable that one year later we are modifying our State's bail law. Reforming bail was always about changing a system that criminalizes poverty. I am

very concerned that these rollbacks will allow this discrimination to persist. Adding some crimes back to the bail-eligible list does not make us safer, it simply means that individuals who can afford bail will be released for the same crimes as someone who will remain in jail only because they cannot. The right wing smears that led the Governor to insist that rollbacks needed to happen do not change one simple fact: bail reform has been working. Thousands of New Yorkers have been able to go back to their families and not lose their jobs or custody of their children while showing up to court and answering the charges brought against them. The changes included in the final version of the budget will mean thousands of New Yorkers will be back in pre-trial detention simply because they are poor. And lest we forget, we will be sending them to jails that have some of the highest infection rates in the world during a global pandemic. That is not something I could participate in.

A bright light in this budget is the inclusion of the Criminal Justice Discovery Compensation Fund that will ensure District Attorneys' offices can comply with the newly implemented Discovery reform laws."

"There is no question that there are challenging times ahead for our state and our country. And there is no question that the austerity policies established in this document will only make them even more difficult. For those of us who are in public service to change our laws and our system, to make our society fairer and more just, we need to recognize this crisis as a resounding call to action. Now, more than ever, it is our solemn obligation to protect and fight for the most vulnerable among us. This budget is without a doubt a step backward, but my commitment to making it right for our communities has only become stronger."

Stay healthy, stay safe, and stay home.

In solidarity,

Gustavo Rivera