



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

SENATOR ALESSANDRA BIAGGI ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE 2020 BUDGET

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI April 3, 2020

ALBANY, NY – This week, the New York State Executive and Legislature approved the SFY 2020-2021 Budget.

State Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester) issued the following statement:

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“We are living in an unprecedented moment — we could not have imagined when this budget process began in January the challenges we would be currently facing in our State. I was under no illusion that this would be an easy process, or that we would end up with a budget that pleased everyone. In my fourteen months serving in the New York State Senate, I have learned that compromise is inherent to the legislative process; and it is this lesson that enables me to choose the fights that would best be won for my constituents. This year, I understood that given the growing deficit our state faces, compromise would play a central role in our decision-making. But, what I did not foresee was how deeply disappointed I would be in the path we ultimately chose and the priorities this budget reflects.”

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For starters, we could have raised revenue that would financially support all of our communities through this difficult time, by asking the New Yorkers with the most to chip in a little more. We could have implemented a pied-a-terre tax, taxed stock buy-backs, or legalized marijuana and mobile sports betting. Our conference fought hard for these revenue raisers. Instead, the budget was balanced on the backs of the most vulnerable New Yorkers and on our healthcare system. We have cast a dark shadow over our communities in their greatest moment of need, by delivering a budget that puts millions of New Yorkers in harm's way and fails to meet the needs of our healthcare system under these extraordinary circumstances. I am also devastated that just three months into enacting transformative criminal justice reforms, we decided to roll back that progress.

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I have always been critical of the way New York State structures and passes the budget each year. The budget process forces us to choose between our values when we should not have to, rigging the system to pit New Yorkers against one another: environmentalists against transit advocates, good government groups against low wage workers, religious communities against advocates for criminal justice reform. I left my first budget experience as a legislator in 2019 feeling deeply disappointed in the process, and in 2020 I walk away feeling even worse. It is disgraceful that, even during such a dire moment in our State's history, New York chooses to conduct business as usual and allow consequential policies to surpass the legislative process without thorough discussion and public input.

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I do not want to detract from some of the good fights won in this budget. We codified and expanded the ban on fracking and banned styrofoam. We passed the prevailing wage, and

legalized e-bikes. We finally legalized gestational surrogacy. These are wise policy changes that will help New Yorkers.

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But the fact remains that this year's budget is a microcosm of what is wrong with this process and the disproportionate power dynamics in Albany. Fundamentally altering the way the budget is done is my top priority, so that all branches of government are on equal footing and New Yorkers actually have a voice. I am committed to educating my constituents, and others, about this deeply flawed process — and ultimately changing it.”

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