



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Senator Michelle Hinchey Announces Passage of State Budget that Prioritizes Critical Programs and Initiatives for Upstate New Yorkers

MICHELLE HINCHEY April 7, 2021

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ALBANY, NY – The New York State Senate, Assembly, and Governor have reached an agreement on the FY 2022 State Budget, which includes significant gains for Upstate New York advocated for by State Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46). Hinchey, who represents Greene and Montgomery Counties and parts of Albany, Schenectady, and Ulster Counties, successfully fought to secure funding for programs and initiatives that are important to the

communities of her 5-county senate district.

In response to the enactment of the 2021-2022 budget, Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “This is one of the most challenging times our state has ever faced and it calls for a budget that redefines our priorities and sets us on a path for long-term success. I fought for a budget that would deliver Upstate New Yorkers their fair share of investment to inspire growth and ensure that our communities are empowered with the resources they need to build back stronger. We were able to secure record school funding, establish a plan for universal pre-k, take steps to bring broadband to every home in New York, increase investment in rural healthcare systems, and drive vital funding towards our small businesses and environmental stewardship. The positive effects of this budget will be felt for years to come and I am proud of what we were able to achieve for working people and families in Upstate New York.”

Some of the programs and initiatives Senator Hinchey advocated for that are incorporated in the final 2021-2022 State Budget, include:

Advocating for Broadband for All New Yorkers

Senator Hinchey worked with her colleagues to make sure that the Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act was included in the final budget. The legislation requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to undertake a statewide assessment of broadband access, affordability, and internet speeds to help close the digital divide in New York State. The legislation also requires the PSC to produce a detailed coverage map on its website that indicates internet service by location, which is to be updated annually with a report to the State Legislature, as well as construct fiber optic services in communities with absent or low levels of service, among other provisions.

“If you live in Upstate New York, you, your family, or your business are likely to have suffered from insufficient broadband service and you know all too well that the Governor’s previous claim of 98% state

coverage is just not accurate,” said Senator Hinchey. “It’s hard to fix a problem when you don’t know the full extent, which is why we need accurate household-level mapping data to identify the service gaps across our state so that we can close them once and for all. That’s what the Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act will achieve. Access to reliable high-speed internet is a basic necessity, and I’m glad I was able to push for the inclusion of this bill in the final budget.”

Bringing Pre-K to Upstate New York & Delivering Record School Funding

Senator Hinchey was a leading voice in the fight to expand pre-kindergarten programs to Upstate New York and helped secure record school funding of \$29.5 billion to ensure that all districts in SD-46 and across the state receive the resources they need to provide quality education to every student.

The final budget includes:

- **A two-year phase-in to bring universal four-year-old full-day pre-k programs to nearly all school districts in New York**, with \$90 million provided by formula and \$15 million via a competitive grant process. Funding is prioritized to school districts that do not currently have state-funded full-day pre-k slots. **This proposal will provide additional pre-k funding via the allocation formula to 232 school districts, giving 99% of the schools in Senator Hinchey’s district access to full-day pre-k.** This is the largest pre-k investment since 2014 and will bring total pre-k funding in 2021-22 to \$964 million.
- **A three-year phase-in of Foundation Aid to ensure that all districts receive full Foundation Aid by the 2023-24 school year.** Every school district is guaranteed a minimum 2.0 percent increase in Foundation Aid and at least 60 percent of their full Foundation Aid funding for the 2021-22 school year.

“Investing in education is one of the most important things we can do to support the next generation and ensures that our youngest New Yorkers develop the tools they need to be successful later in their lives. For the first time ever, our state budget includes record school funding and a commitment to expanding full-

day pre-k to working and middle-class families, a service that will pay dividends to our children and ease the burden of childcare on working parents. These are transformative investments for our upstate families and I'm proud to have fought for the futures of the children I represent," said Senator Hinchey.

Bolstering Infrastructure Investments & Securing Needed Funding for Municipalities

With Senator Hinchey's advocacy, funding for Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) and Extreme Winter Recovery were protected and local highway departments in SD-46 will receive a needed increase in state funding for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) and PAVE NY program. The FY 2022 Budget includes:

- Full restoration of **\$39 million in Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM).**
- **A \$100 million increase for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) for a total of \$538 million.**
- Full restoration of **\$100 million for the Extreme Winter Recovery Program.**
- **\$100 million for the PAVE NY program** to support the rehabilitation and reconstruction of local highways and roads.

"Our upstate communities are in desperate need of infrastructure investment--from aging bridges to crumbling roads. I worked hard to make sure that not only were there no cuts to local governments but that there was increased funding to critical programs like CHIPS and PAVE NY that help our municipalities keep our infrastructure safe. I'm proud to protect these absolutely essential resources and to make sure that our local highway departments have the tools they need to repair weather-damaged roadways and strengthen our aging upstate infrastructure for the long-term," said Senator Hinchey.

Supporting Small Business, Workers, & Independent Venues

The budget includes significant support for small businesses across the state, allocating a total of **\$1 billion to support small businesses**, including **\$800 million for small business assistance grants**

and **\$200 million in small business tax credits.**

“It was important for us to stand up for small business in this year’s budget, and I fought hard to ensure that our state made a historic \$1 billion investment in direct aid for our Main Streets,” said Senator Hinchey. “As we begin to build back from COVID-19, it’s imperative that we do all we can to restart our economy with a central focus on our small neighborhood shops to give them the best chance of recovery and protect the character of our communities.”

Senator Hinchey worked to ensure that independent arts and cultural venues would be eligible to receive Small Business Assistance Grants.

“Our independent arts and performance venues are the driving force of our cultural life here in Upstate New York, and I was glad to have successfully advocated for this critical grant funding to be available to them to help keep their doors open,” said Senator Hinchey.

Additional Key Investments to Support Workers and Small Businesses Include:

- **Full restoration of \$3.45 million for the Empire State Development Tourism Matching Grant Funds.** Due to Senator Hinchey’s advocacy, full funding has been restored to the Empire State Development Tourism Matching Grant program, which provides Tourism Promotion Agencies (“TPAs”) the resources to promote their destinations in new market areas to increase visitor volume and spending.
- **Establishing Prevailing Wage Standards for Green Energy Projects.** As New York directs more resources into renewable sources of energy, it’s critical that we invest in the workers responsible for building out that infrastructure. The final budget includes provisions for prevailing-wage standards for workers employed by state-supported projects related to this transition, ensuring that good-paying, local jobs will be created as we move toward a green energy economy.

- **\$500,000 for the Labor Leading on Climate Jobs Initiative**, a program of The Worker Institute at the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations that brings unions, environmental organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders together to develop ambitious and effective climate policy to drive job creation and economic development in communities across the state.
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Providing Relief for Middle-Class Taxpayers

The FY 2022 Budget incorporates the first-ever "circuit breaker" property tax plan that includes \$440 million in property tax relief for homeowners who earn less than \$250,000 by providing credits of up to \$350 to homeowners who pay more than 6% of their income in property taxes. The final budget also rejects the Executive proposal to delay the implementation of the ongoing middle-class tax cut for one year, which will save taxpayers \$400 million this year.

“New York families pay some of the highest taxes in the country, and in today’s economy, we need to do all that we can to significantly reduce that burden,” said Senator Hinchey. “I was incredibly proud to advocate for the first-ever property tax circuit breaker which will bring new, meaningful relief for middle-class homeowners and ensure that families and thousands of small businesses can benefit from decreased personal income tax rates through the continuation of the multi-year middle-class tax cut.”

Putting the Bond Act on the Ballot, Fighting for The Catskill Park & Protecting our Environment

Senator Hinchey fought hard for the Catskills in this year’s state budget. Due to her successful advocacy, state funding for The Catskill Park is now on par with the Adirondacks through the stewardship line of the \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which earmarks \$1.55 million for spending on visitor safety, wilderness protection, and activities to address issues related to overuse.

With Senator Hinchey’s strong advocacy, the final budget authorizes a \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act, which will allow the state to leverage funding to reduce the impacts of climate change as well as preserve and restore our natural resources, pending approval by voters in November. The Bond Act includes:

- \$1 billion for restoration and flood risk reduction.
- \$700 million for climate change mitigation.
- \$550 million for water quality improvement and resilient infrastructure.
- \$550 million for open space land conservation and recreation.

To ensure that current and future New Yorkers have access to clean water, the **Budget invests \$500 million in clean water funding** to help communities upgrade their water and sewer infrastructure, reduce stormwater runoff, and protect our waterways and agricultural soils from sources of pollution.

“Access to safe, clean drinking water is a human right, which is why it is critically important that our communities are able to invest in needed upgrades and repairs,” said Senator Hinchey. “I strongly advocated in support of the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act, and I am thrilled that this measure has been included in the final budget. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for New York to fund essential clean water infrastructure projects in our communities and support a transition to a green economy with the creation of nearly 65,000 green jobs in the process.”

The 2021-2022 State Budget also codifies key parts of Senator Hinchey’s bill (S4092) to increase the rebate for municipalities to purchase clean energy vehicles through the state’s Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) rebate program. The budget raises both the floor and ceiling of rebates from a minimum of \$750 to \$2,500 and a maximum rebate from \$5,000 to \$7,500—a change that will save taxpayer dollars, improve energy efficiency, and reduce harmful emissions that hurt our health and add to the impacts of climate change.

“My bill to create larger municipal rebates that help our local governments purchase electric vehicles is a smart step that will save taxpayer money, reduce climate-destabilizing emissions, and protect the health of our communities and that of our planet. I’m proud to see it included in the final budget,” **said Senator Hinchey.**

The final State Budget agreement includes funding for several local projects and programs in the 46th District that were secured by Senator Hinchey:

- **\$100,000 for Catskills Park Stewardship**

For the first time, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which provides communities with resources for a wide range of local environmental projects, includes \$100,000 in targeted funding secured by Senator Hinchey for stewardship efforts in the Catskills region to support Catskills ecosystem research and park stewardship and improvement measures.

- **\$310,000 for the Renewable Energy Accelerator in the City of Amsterdam**

Due to Senator Hinchey’s advocacy, the FY 2022 Budget allocates \$310,000 in state funding for the City of Amsterdam’s Urban Renewal Agency to establish the “Renewable Energy Accelerator,” a new facility in which local entrepreneurs will assemble the talent needed to develop projects and commercialize technologies in the renewable energy field. The funding will also provide for the creation of other collaborative opportunities with local educational institutions, both at the high school and community college level.

- **\$500,000 for Valley Health Services to Expand Dementia Care in the Mohawk Valley**

Secured by Senator Hinchey, the FY 2022 Budget allocates \$500,000 to Valley Health Services, a part of Basset Health System, to fund the construction of a new not-for-profit nursing home facility that will address unmet dementia-related needs for care and services in the Mohawk Valley region, providing dementia, subacute, and neurobehavioral care in an innovative, residential-style design that increases resident quality of life.

- **\$380,000 to Legal Services of the Hudson Valley for the Veterans and Military Families Advocacy Project**

This funding, secured by Senator Hinchey, will be used to support Legal Services of the Hudson Valley's (LSHV) Veterans and Military Families Advocacy Project (VMFAP), enabling staff attorneys and volunteer lawyers to continue providing free legal assistance to veterans and their family members in civil legal matters. LSHV's VMFAP also fosters the successful reintegration of veterans into the community by helping them access benefits and services that support their basic human needs such as housing, health, and safety, as well as with financial and employment challenges.

- **\$100,000 for Craft Beverages Trail of the Catskills**

Senator Hinchey secured \$100,000 in State Budget funding to create and promote a tourism trail that links craft breweries, distilleries, wineries, and cideries in the Catskills region, providing a destination experience for residents and visitors alike and supporting our agriculture-based economy and small businesses.

- **\$120,000 for Walkway Over the Hudson's Farm to Market Initiative**

This funding, secured by Senator Hinchey, will be used to renovate the Friends Pavilion so that it can provide exposure and retail space for small businesses in the Hudson Valley to showcase and sell locally grown food, drink, produce, spirits, and other New York-made products. The funding will also be used to hire a Farm to Market Project Manager who will work in partnership with Taste NY to build collaborations with local producers and vendor networks to increase their markets and develop related farmers' market programming.

- **\$20,000 for Telehealth Devices to Support Patients Seeking Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services from Family Services, Inc.**

This funding, secured by Senator Hinchey, will be used to treat and support a wide range of patients in Ulster County, including those struggling with substance use disorders, by providing them with cellular phones and tablets so that those with limited access to virtual technology can receive telehealth services administered by Family Services' providers.

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