



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Westchester Senate Delegation Holds Two Budget Forums to Hear from the Public and Build Transparency

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS February 17, 2021

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(**Westchester County, NY**) - New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and members of the Westchester Senate Delegation - Senators Shelley Mayer, Jamaal Bailey, Alessandra Biaggi, Pete Harckham and Elijah Reichlin-Melnick - held two virtual forums on the New York State budget on **February 11th** and **February 16th** to hear from the public.

Over 90 people testified, including community groups, local elected officials and residents. Many issues were brought up, including, but not limited to, school funding, raising revenue, mitigating climate change, the costs of child care and home care, caregiver wages, an excluded workers' fund, and legalizing marijuana. Lawmakers said the forums served as an opportunity for residents to make their voices heard, as they prepare to negotiate the State budget.

"The voices of our residents matter. These budget forums are an opportunity for us to listen and better inform our efforts in Albany," said Senate Majority Leader Andrea-Stewart Cousins. "Our constituents and local organizations brought up issues and funding requests that are very important. I wish we had the revenue to support them all; however, as we all know, this budget will be uniquely challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is great need, and support from the federal government would make a big difference."

"I am committed to working with my legislative colleagues, advocates and NYS residents to ensure this year's budget reflects our commitment to building New York back stronger," said Senator Shelley B. Mayer, 37th District. "Thank you to the community members and advocates who do an extraordinary job capturing the challenges our communities face and making their voices heard. We will not give up on the state's obligation to ensure a quality education for every child and invest in the programs that lift up struggling New Yorkers."

"I truly appreciate the wealth of public testimony received at the two Senate Budget hearings, and commend residents and stakeholders for making their voices heard," said State Senator Pete Harckham. "The state budget should be the people's budget, and these hearings help the public claim ownership."

"I am proud to be a part of a delegation that prioritizes the people's voice," said State Senator Jamaal Bailey. "I greatly appreciated the testimony of every panelist and encourage even more residents to get involved. The budget is crucial for the residents of this state, and it is important to make sure that they have a say in the process. I would like to thank my colleagues of the Westchester Delegation for their commitment to empowering residents."

"Each year, the Westchester Budget Forum provides an important opportunity for community members to lend their voices to the budget process," said State Senator Alessandra Biaggi. "I am committed to fighting for a budget that truly reflects the needs of our communities and helps our districts recover from the devastation of COVID-19. I want to extend my gratitude to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and all of my colleagues in the Westchester Delegation who joined us, as well as all the community members who took time to share their priorities and hopes for this year's budget."

"Hearing from the dozens of constituents and local organizations who testified at these budget hearings has provided vital information and clarity on the ways the state budget will

impact my constituents, and all New Yorkers," said State Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick. "I am thankful to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my colleagues in the State Senate for organizing and taking part in these valuable public hearings, and grateful to everyone who took the time to testify,"

New York State must pass a budget by April 1st. If you missed the budget forums, you can watch them on [Facebook](#) or [Youtube](#). Individuals still wishing to submit testimony can do so, by emailing [WestchesterDelegation@nysenate.gov](mailto:WestchesterDelegation@nysenate.gov).

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Westchester Senate Delegation:

34th SD -- Senator Alessandra Biaggi: (718) 822-2049

35th SD -- Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins: (914) 423-4031

36th SD -- Senator Jamaal T. Bailey: (718) 547-8854

37th SD -- Senator Shelley B. Mayer: (914) 934-5250

38th SD -- Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick: (914) 941-2041

40th SD -- Senator Peter Harckham: (914) 241-4600