



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Lawmakers, Water Advocates, and Municipal Leaders Urge Clean Water Funding in State Budget

MICHELLE HINCHEY March 29, 2023



**ALBANY, NY** – Today in Albany, Senator Michelle Hinchey gathered a group of state lawmakers, water advocates and technicians, environmental advocates, and municipal organizations to urge state leaders to fund her proposal for the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP) in the FY'24 state budget. SWAP, based on bill **S4350-Hinchey**, would provide municipalities with a continuous funding stream through the state budget to help them more efficiently plan for and finance water system replacements and repairs. Due to Hinchey's advocacy, the Senate one-house proposes \$100 million for SWAP as part of the

Environmental Protection Fund.

On Monday, advocates for SWAP [delivered letters of support to Governor Kathy Hochul and State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie](#) in an effort to get both on board with the Senate's \$100 million ask. Hinchey's proposal for SWAP is supported by over 7,000 members who comprise the New York Section American Water Works Association, the New York Rural Water Association, and the New York Water Environment Association. Municipal supporters include members of the New York State Conference of Mayors, Association of Counties, and Association of Towns, while environmental supporters include Riverkeeper and Scenic Hudson.

**Senator Michelle Hinchey**, "Access to clean and safe water is a fundamental right that we have enshrined in our own State Constitution, and yet, in communities across our state, this access is threatened by failing water infrastructure and one-time grants that rarely make their way to the small towns and cities that urgently need them. I'm proud to lead the charge with a solution through the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP), which will deliver reliable, continuous support to help municipalities fix broken lines now and plan longterm water system maintenance. Our Senate one-house commits a historic \$100 million for SWAP, and we will continue fighting to include it in the final budget to ensure clean water for all New Yorkers while saving municipalities time and money."

New York has some of the oldest water infrastructure in the nation — some service pipes date back over 200 years, well past their useful life, and others are still made of materials, including wood and lead, which are causing costly breaks for municipalities and dangerous public health impacts for New Yorkers. Since the 1980s, [two-thirds of all water infrastructure investment](#) has come from state and local governments due to federal disinvestment. However, the money currently allocated for water system upgrades in New York rarely

reaches smaller communities, which often lack the staff and resources to obtain this funding, forcing many to defer modernization projects. Over the next 20 years, **an estimated \$22.8 billion is needed** to improve all of New York's drinking water systems alone, with 64% specifically needed for water main repairs and replacements.

**939 local governments and 27 local water authorities provide 94% of all public water in New York State**, all of which require funding to support the maintenance of local water systems. SWAP funds would go directly to these systems to help municipalities plan and make repairs that limit the disruption to the communities they serve, promote efficient use of government funding, and protect the public health and the environment of all New Yorkers.

"I thank Senator Hinchey for introducing the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP) and I am proud to be a cosponsor," **said Senator Lea Webb**. "This legislation will protect residents from bearing the burden of paying for updates to our aging and deteriorating water infrastructure, by providing much-needed state funding to municipalities. SWAP will ensure we can help municipalities update our water infrastructure to head off systemic failures that endanger our environment, health, and economy."

**Senator Kevin Thomas said**, "The SWAP Program is a crucial step towards ensuring that all municipalities across the State have access to safe and clean drinking water. This funding will help municipalities finance critical upgrades and repairs to their water systems, ensuring our communities have the infrastructure they need to thrive, while also protecting public health and the environment. I'm proud to support these key efforts to prioritize safe water for all New Yorkers, as they will further protect public health and the environment."

**Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther said**, "I am happy to support the Safe Water and

Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP). Municipalities in my district and throughout New York State desperately need water infrastructure improvements but often struggle to finance and afford them. The need for strengthening our infrastructure is urgent, and with the increasing cost of projects and materials, this bill becomes even more important. I look forward to continuing work throughout my district to help ensure the safety and sustainability of our infrastructure and communities.”

**New York Section American Water Works Association Legislative Consultant Judy Hansen said,** “NYSAWWA strongly supports funding SWAP and thanks Senator Hinchey for her leadership. Our members supply drinking water to more than 18 million New Yorkers, and this funding will allow local governments to have a recurring funding stream to improve our infrastructure and improve the public health of all New Yorkers.”

**New York Water Environment Association President Donna Grudier said,** “Water and wastewater infrastructure requires continuous maintenance. This SWAP program, as proposed by Senator Hinchey, will give local municipalities the much-needed continuous funding for the repair and maintenance of their infrastructure for generations to come. We thank Senator Michelle Hinchey and all legislative supporters for advocating for this critical budget priority.”

**New York Rural Water Association President, Matt Thorp, said,** “The SWAP Legislation, as proposed by NYS Senator Hinchey, will provide water, wastewater, and storm water utilities with essentially needed funds to complete infrastructure repairs and improvements that do not meet the requirements of a large-scale capital project. This legislation would allow utilities to couple their O&M budget funds with the SWAP funds to accomplish more rehabilitative projects, thus better serving the citizens of New York State.”

**NYS Association of Counties Executive Director Stephen J. Acquario** said, “New York State has some of the oldest water infrastructure in the nation, and when aging water systems fail, it threatens our health, environment, and economy and leaves local taxpayers to pick up the tab. NYSAC strongly supports the inclusion of Senator Hinchey's proposal for the Safe Water Infrastructure Action Program in the final State Budget because it will provide communities with the quick and reliable assistance they need to repair, replace, and update critical water infrastructure.”

“While NYCOM appreciates the State’s significant investment of resources for water and sewer infrastructure, many municipalities, despite their need, simply do not have the capacity or the personnel to navigate the process necessary to access these funds,” **said Peter A. Baynes, New York State Conference of Mayors, Executive Director.** “Senator Hinchey’s SWAP proposal would ensure that local governments throughout New York State would annually receive a predictable, formula-based allocation that they could use to address their water and sewer infrastructure maintenance costs, as well as related capital projects. It would also allow for better coordination with local road construction projects, saving municipalities both time and money. We urge our State leaders to include the SWAP program in the final 2023-24 State Budget.”

**Sarah Brancatella, Legislative Director and Counsel, New York State Association of Towns,** said, “If adopted, Senator Hinchey’s proposal creating a dedicated fund for local governments to use on water infrastructure would have a huge, positive impact in many different areas. Among others, it protects New Yorkers’ constitutional right to clean water, reduces barriers to housing development, and helps taxpayers by reducing their costs. The Association of Towns is proud to stand with Senator Hinchey in supporting this legislation”

“Hudson River communities need at least \$2.2 billion to repair and upgrade wastewater infrastructure, according to our analysis of New York State’s 2023 list of eligible projects,” **said Jeremy Cherson, Riverkeeper’s Senior Manager of Government Affairs.** “In its 2022 report card, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave New York’s wastewater infrastructure a D+ and our drinking water infrastructure a C+ grade. In this context, Senator Hinchey’s bipartisan SWAP legislation included in the Senate one-house budget would provide much needed funding for water infrastructure projects across the state, particularly in communities that struggle to access competitive grant programs. Riverkeeper strongly urges Governor Hochul and Speaker Heastie to include the program in a final budget.”

**Carli Fraccarolli, State Policy Coordinator for Scenic Hudson, said,** “With increased flooding from more frequent extreme weather events, storm water and sewage regularly pollute drinking water sources because outdated infrastructure can’t handle the excess volume. Many local governments urgently need to replace lead — and even wood — service pipes, but they don’t have the capacity to apply for the grants and programs that currently exist. Senator Hinchey’s Safe Water and Infrastructure Action Program (SWAP) provides a reliable, efficient, and common-sense funding mechanism to address this issue and assure clean water for all New Yorkers. Scenic Hudson supports the Senate’s proposal to include SWAP in the final state budget.”

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