



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

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LEA WEBB May 6, 2023

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Fiscal Year 2023-2024 New York State Budget Includes \$5 Million Secured by the Senate for Upstate New York's Historic Theaters

Ithaca, NY - Today, Senator Webb was in Ithaca to announce \$5 Million in state funding for Upstate New York's historic theaters Alive Downtowns! Coalition stretching from Jamestown to Poughkeepsie. The State Theatre of Ithaca will receive \$103,000 to support its operational expenses as part of this budget allocation in the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 State Budget, passed earlier this week in Albany.

Senator Webb and her colleagues successfully advocated to include \$5 million in funding for Upstate New York's historic theaters in the final budget, arguing that historic theaters provide the same public benefit as aquariums, parks, and zoos, all of which receive annual funding in the state budget. With this budget win, Senator Webb and her colleagues have delivered a critical financial boost to historic theaters like Ithaca's State Theatre to aid their recovery following several difficult pandemic years that closed their doors and strained their finances. Together, these facilities serve millions of people across Upstate New York, providing a place for community members to experience art, music, culture, and serving as economic engines and tourism draws to the region.

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“Since 1928, the State Theatre has stood as a premier destination for entertainment and culture in the Southern Tier,” said Senator Lea Webb. “I am thrilled that we were able to secure funds in the final budget to support a truly special place in the heart of Ithaca that provides access to music, dance, theater, and community for the people of our district and across the region. Theaters across Upstate New York were hit hard by the loss of revenue and audiences during the pandemic. These organizations play an important role in our communities, and I am sure that this investment will pay important dividends across our region.”

“The State Theatre has long been a cornerstone and cultural icon of Ithaca. Throughout its history, the theatre has hosted Vaudeville shows, early movie screenings in two separate theaters when the balcony was temporarily separated, plays, and some of the most talented musical acts of every era since its opening in 1928. The Theatre has evolved many times over the last century but always served to enrich the lives of residents and tourists to the area. As an anchor community nonprofit not only has it brought joy to every age and generation, it has also served as a critically important home for other theater and dance companies in need of a beautiful home. I'm honored to have the opportunity to champion for funding and support the theatre's vitality for generations to come.” **said Assemblymember Anna Kelles**

“We are thrilled to see that New York lawmakers understand the real financial impact historic theatres have on all upstate economies and now consider us essential in the same regard as they do zoos and aquariums statewide – destinations that have great public benefit to the citizens of this state,” **said Doug Levine, Executive Director of the State Theatre of Ithaca.** “This appropriation will allow these

important arts venues to continue to be a part of growing upstate downtowns while guaranteeing accessibility for all citizens for many years to come.”

“We are so grateful for Senator Webb’s support of our community’s much beloved State Theater. This historic gem of a theater brings plays, concerts, and many events for Ithacans of all ages, introducing some young people to their first theater experience. The vitality of our downtown will be greatly enhanced by this funding support from the Senator and Assemblymember Kelles.” **said Laura Lewis, Ithaca Mayor,**

“History, arts and entertainment, foot traffic, commerce, and downtown rejuvenation all come together at Ithaca's State Theatre.” **said Gary Ferguson, Executive Director of the Downtown Ithaca Alliance.**

“The Theatre serves as one of Downtown Ithaca's most popular and significant destinations, for area residents and alike. This allocation of funding from New York State is crucial to helping our State Theatre and similar venues like it across our state, navigate their recovery from the negative impacts of the pandemic. We thank all who helped make this possible, and especially the efforts of Senator Webb”

In addition to the State Theatre of Ithaca, this funding will benefit the following historic Upstate New York theaters: Bardavon 1896 Opera House (Poughkeepsie), Clemens Center (Elmira), Palace Performing Arts Center (Albany), Proctors Collaborative (Schenectady, Albany, Saratoga), The Reg Lenna Center for the Arts (Jamestown), Rochester Broadway Theatre League’s Auditorium Theatre (Rochester), Shea's Performing Arts Center (Buffalo), The Smith Center for the Arts (Geneva), Stanley Theatre (Utica), Syracuse Area Landmark Theatre, Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, and Ulster Performing Arts Center (Kingston).

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