



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Community Update: Budget Passes

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER May 5, 2023

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share that the Senate and Assembly passed, and the Governor signed the FY 2023-2024 New York State Budget. Like every budget, this budget is a result of compromise, with wins and losses. But I am proud of many of the successes, especially the historic investments we are making in our public schools and in other areas that will address the challenges we face.

Below is a summary of some of the significant accomplishments in the budget.

### **Historic Investment in Education**

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I am proud of the historic investments New York State is making in this budget for our public schools. We know that one of the most important investments the state can make is an investment in the future.

**Foundation Aid:** After a prolonged fight, we are finally in the third and final year of fully paying the Foundation Aid Formula, which was designed in 2007 to ensure that every child receives a “sound basic education,” and that districts are funded based on need, not politics. This transformative investment in our K-12 public schools is the largest annual school aid funding in New York State’s history. This moment is a testament to the leadership of our

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and the persistence of my colleague, Senator Robert Jackson and so many advocates who have fought tirelessly alongside me to achieve what our students are owed, need, and deserve.

**Full Day Pre-K for 4-Year-Olds:** New York State is investing \$150 million in pre-K funding, including funds to increase reimbursement rates for early adopting districts that are only reimbursed for a half day. This investment reflects our conference's commitment to expanding pre-K to all districts outside New York City. This funding will allow children to get a head start on learning that may not otherwise be available, while also providing support for parents working full time.

**School Meals for Students:** I am thrilled that this budget includes another historic investment of \$135 million to expand access to school breakfast and lunch for nearly 300,000 new students across New York State. Every teacher and student knows how difficult it is for children to learn when they are hungry. This relief will bring improved academic performance, social and emotional development, and a more unified school environment for over 80% of New York State's students, while easing expenses for families.

The budget also takes important steps to put our schools for students with disabilities, the 853s, 4410s, and Special Acts, on sustainable ground by directing SED to develop a new tuition rate - setting formula to replace our outdated current plan.

In addition, this budget:

- Rejects proposed tuition hikes for CUNY and SUNY in-state students
- Provides \$103 million in operating aid for SUNY schools and \$53 million for CUNY
- Allocates \$20 million for public libraries

Despite these huge victories for our students and schools, I am deeply disappointed that this budget authorizes the reissuance of 14 “zombie charters” in New York City. Charter schools place an enormous financial burden on New York City, other host districts around the state, and traditional public schools. I believe that expanding the number of charter schools in New York City — at a time of greatly reduced demand - will be detrimental to our traditional public school students.

**Raise the Wage and Fair Pay for Homecare:**

This budget also makes a substantial commitment to ensuring that workers receive a much-deserved liveable wage. While I would have preferred a higher minimum wage, beginning in 2026, the minimum wage in our region will rise to \$17 per hour. We have also made tremendous progress in tying automatic minimum wage increases to inflation. In addition, the Legislature held off efforts to erode the progress we have made in increasing homecare workers’ wages, retaining much of the increase above the minimum wage in the out years for homecare workers. Whether paying rent and utilities, putting food on the table, paying for child care, and so much more, we must pay workers enough to live in our communities, and must acknowledge that without higher wages, we cannot sustain the demand for homecare services for many of our older and disabled neighbors. Without that, too many will not be able to live comfortably in their homes.

**Criminal Justice Reform & Bail:**

I strongly supported the criminal justice reforms we adopted several years ago, as we sought to make sure our justice system was not determined by the wealth of an accused person before the trial. At the same time, I have heard from, and listened to, my constituents and law enforcement personnel who suggested we needed specific improvements to the laws to deal with legitimate concerns about public safety.

The adopted budget allows judges to make more holistic decisions surrounding cases involving repeat felony offenders, an issue about which I have heard from many local residents. It eliminates the requirement that judges use the “least restrictive means” standard when determining pre-trial release. Under the new standard, judges will have to “consider the kind and degree of control necessary to ensure return to court” for select non-violent misdemeanors and felonies. The new standard will also include a robust list of factors for courts to consider, to provide safeguards, and ensure that judges are truly making careful evaluations. The new standard retains the principle that the purpose of bail or any other form of pre-trial release is to make sure that the defendant returns to court for trial. This approach, while not perfect, tries to strike a balance between ensuring that the rights of defendants are protected while providing judges with additional tools in cases involving repeat offenders and serious crimes.

The budget also includes significant investments in funding for public safety including:

- \$160 million to support the implementation of discovery reform
- \$92 million for aid for prosecution and defense funding throughout New York
- \$347 million in funding to evidence based gun violence reduction programs
- \$39 million to combat hate crimes and Anti-AAPI Violence.

### **Child Care:**

The final adopted budget also makes critical investments in childcare — including \$500 million in workforce stabilization grants, a new tax credit for businesses that create or expand child care slots for their employees, and expanded eligibility for New York State’s child care assistance program. These investments are extremely important for our families,

for childcare workers, and for our economy.

Empire State Child Tax Credit: This budget also includes a great achievement in expanding the Empire State Child Credit to children 0 - 4 years. By expanding eligibility, more families will receive the credit, helping to lift children out of poverty. This credit will help:

- 584,000 more households
- 993,500 adults
- 993,700 children

### **Local Budget Items:**

I am proud that my colleague Assemblyman Steve Otis and I were able to secure \$17.5 million for the Mamaroneck Sheldrake US Army Corps of Engineers flood project. This project is vitally important to protect our community from the deleterious effects of climate change in the future.

In this budget, there were many more important wins for programs and municipalities around my district. I will be announcing many of them in the days ahead.

### **Housing:**

Throughout the budget process and negotiations, I have been outspoken on the need for affordable housing but the weaknesses of the Governor's proposed Housing Compact. I am pleased to say that this plan was not included in the adopted budget. The Senate successfully pushed for the inclusion of a number of funding allocations to help tenants and homeowners.

- \$391 million in funding for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program
- \$40 million for the Homeowners Protection Program
- \$25 million for a First Time Homeowners Program

I remain committed to working with my colleagues, local municipalities, and residents to expand access to affordable housing and remain committed to ensuring that tenants who pay their rent and abide by their leases are not subject to unreasonable rent increases and are allowed to stay in their homes.

### **Environment:**

The adopted budget builds on prior work and makes significant progress in protecting our climate. This includes the passage of the All-Electric Building Act which requires all NEW construction of buildings seven stories or less be all-electric by December 31, 2025 and requires new buildings regardless of size to be all-electric by December 31, 2028.

This legislation will only impact new homes and buildings. If you have a gas stove already installed in your home, you will be able to keep or replace your gas stove. In addition, this budget includes measures to ensure that any proceeds from emission reduction programs established by the state are returned to consumers in the form of rebates and to make the state more resilient against climate risk.

The budget also includes:

- \$400 million to the Environmental Protection Fund for projects that protect the environment and enhance communities
- \$500 million for the Clean Water and Infrastructure Act

## **Reproductive Rights:**

I am proud to say that the final adopted budget includes the means to ensure that abortion care is more accessible to all New Yorkers. We secured funding for reproductive healthcare providers, accessibility of medication abortion on SUNY and CUNY campuses, data protection of reproductive health patients, increased Medicaid reimbursement rates for abortion services, and the adopted budget ensures that medication abortion mifepristone remains available to New Yorkers.

I will be having a virtual forum on the State budget in the near future to answer any questions you may have. Keep an eye out for more information on that. I am honored to serve you and will keep fighting for every New Yorker, even during difficult times.

As always, if there is anything my office can assist you with, please email me at [smayer@nysenate.gov](mailto:smayer@nysenate.gov) or call (914) 934-5250.

Warm Regards,  
Shelley B. Mayer  
State Senator  
37th District

[Read the full community update here.](#)