



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

## Senator Cooney Announces Wins For Rochester And Monroe County In FY25 NYS Budget

JEREMY COONEY April 20, 2024



(ALBANY, NY) - **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** today announced some of the benefits residents of Monroe County will begin to see following the passage of New York State's FY25 budget. Senator Cooney explained that this year's budget tackles issues faced by local community members throughout their daily lives, making investments in education, public safety, transportation, and more.

**Senator Cooney** said, “It may not have been right on time, but there’s a lot we got right in this budget for Rochester and Monroe County. From supporting our students and investing in affordable housing, to bolstering our public transit systems and prioritizing public safety, our budget is forward-thinking and aimed at meeting the needs of our upstate communities. I’m proud to have worked alongside Governor Hochul and my colleagues in the legislature to get this done and I’m pleased with the strides we made towards making our state a place where everyone is better able to live and thrive.”

Below are some of Senator Cooney’s priorities that were included in this year’s budget:

**Investing in the future of our students:**

Senator Cooney not only helped prevent cuts to our local schools, he also helped secure a 3.9% increase for **school district funding**, bringing the total to \$934 million across the state. This will ensure students in the Rochester City School District and throughout Monroe County towns will continue to be provided the resources and support they need to succeed.

The Senator also explained the importance of not just helping children once they get to school, but also the need to instill a love of learning at an early age. **Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library** is a transformative program that sends free books each month to children ages 0-5. **Senator Cooney has advocated for the expansion of the Imagination Library statewide** after seeing the success of the program in other states and locally in both Rochester and East Rochester. Following that push, the Senator delivered \$500,000 in funding to go towards a grant program that will expand access to children across the state—supporting both existing local programs and new chapters of the Imagination Library. The goal is to get 77% of children enrolled across the state.

**Keeping our communities safe:**

This year's budget includes several investments in public safety, following the rise of crimes against retail establishments. New York is now designating the **“assault of a retail worker”** as a new, separate crime that will be classified as a Class E felony to protect workers and the stores they work in.

Also included is \$25 million to go towards the State Police Taskforce to specifically **target and crack down on organized retail theft** rings that have been operating across the state.

Additional tax incentives have been included to encourage stores to hire security, as well as protections for houses of worship.

#### **Enhancing our public transportation:**

The budget provides an increase in STOA (State Operating Assistance) funding for upstate transit systems, including Rochester's Regional Transit Service (RTS). These funds can help RTS expand their services, providing more frequent and reliable routes for bus passengers, whether it's a daily commuter or a visitor to the community.

#### **Supporting the AAPI community:**

The budget sets aside \$30 million to support New York's AAPI community, the fastest growing population in Upstate New York, across the entire state, and throughout the country. These funds can be used for initiatives such as combating hate crimes, providing crisis intervention services, and investing in the AAPI Community Development Fund.

#### **Combating poverty:**

\$25 million is being set aside in the budget specifically for the City of Rochester to be used for anti-poverty initiatives, especially important in a city where 50% of children live below the poverty line.

**Addressing New York housing:**

The budget invests \$40 million towards the construction of one-to-two family small infill homes in Upstate cities like Rochester to increase housing stock and help alleviate the current strain on the market. An additional \$40 million is being put towards an apartment repair and rehabilitation program to provide small landlords (with less than five units) grants to fix up properties. These funds are specifically set aside for Upstate New York. Protections are also being put in place for renters by allowing upstate municipalities to pass local laws that allow renters to challenge high rent increases and combat price gouging.

**Taking a holistic approach to meet the needs of Rochester and Monroe County:**

Senator Cooney explained that these wins touch on just a few of the areas that will benefit the community. Additional investments have been made to improve our roads and bridges, for our historic upstate arts venues through the “Alive Downtowns!” program, Medicaid increases for nursing homes and hospitals, into workforce development programs with increased funding for MCC, and to support municipalities, like the City and County, with the first time increase in operational funding in over 10 years.

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