



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

# State Senator Gustavo Rivera on the 2024-2025 New York State Budget

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State Senator Gustavo Rivera (D, WF, 33rd District, The Bronx) joined his colleagues in the Senate Majority to vote for the 10 bills of the 2024-2025 New York State Budget. Senator Rivera voted in favor of all bills, including Aid to Localities, Debt Service, Revenue, Capital Projects, State Operations, Legislature and Judiciary, Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation (TEDE), Public Protection and General Government (PPGG), Education, Labor, and Family Assistance (ELFA), and Health and Mental Hygiene (HMH).

## **BUDGET OVERVIEW**

“I am incredibly proud of our Senate Majority Conference led by our Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for fighting tirelessly to reduce the harm that many of the Executive proposals would have caused. In the weeks remaining in this session, I know that our Conference will focus on addressing the concerns of working-class New Yorkers that were not addressed in this budget by the Governor’s heavy-handed austerity and misaligned priorities during a period of extreme wealth inequality.

“Amidst a severe affordability crisis, New Yorkers need the government to support their basic needs, including caring for family members, affordable healthcare, and stable housing. Holding the line on the issues that would make New Yorkers’ lives easier does not end with this budget. My district sent me to Albany to advance policies and secure services that make our communities safer by ensuring economic stability for every New Yorker, and that’s what I will continue to do.”

## **HEALTH**

“Unlike the beginning of her tenure, Governor Hochul’s health budget proposals this year were a blast from the past, declining to sustain the investments our healthcare system needs to stabilize it. I’m dismayed that the Executive was unwilling to do more to ensure the long-term financial stability of healthcare providers and institutions that serve our most vulnerable. While we rightfully increased Medicaid rates for our hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities, we needed more for health services across the board. Many of the providers in our community, including community health centers, home care providers, and hospices, are still facing financial challenges that we must take action to address.

“The consolidation of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) under a single Fiscal Intermediary (FI) to supposedly cut down on costs is a concerning measure that will have serious implications for the populations it serves and will require continued oversight. As a State, we should be pushing to ensure older and differently abled New Yorkers have the choice to stay in their communities and receive the care they need from their loved ones.

“I am incredibly proud that this budget includes several proposals that I have championed for years. One proposal furthers my mission to end medical debt in our State. This new policy will expand financial assistance for New Yorkers that need hospital care and shield them from lawsuits by hospitals, because no one should go

bankrupt simply because they fell ill. I'm also grateful that we are eliminating cost sharing for insulin, a life-saving measure for many diabetic New Yorkers. Two other proposals will expand protections for soon-to-be mothers. One of these will establish pre-natal leave to ensure that their pregnancies are optimal and in that way, keep fighting to reduce our State's maternal mortality rates; this proposal is the first of its kind in our country. The second proposal will ensure the children under the age of six will receive continuous coverage under the Medicaid and Child Health Plus programs, ensuring continuous health coverage and reducing headaches from paperwork for parents that puts their children at risk of gaps in care.

"I'm glad the Executive agreed to apply for a waiver that, when approved, gives the State the ability to impose fees on managed care plans based on the number of members served. The State would impose a heavier tax on Medicaid managed care compared to non-Medicaid managed care and then, the funds would be used to secure a federal match for State Medicaid spending and the entire amount would be reinvested back into the program. It is a potentially short term but lucrative solution to address funding gaps in the Medicaid program. It is also a relief the State will allocate significant funding to SUNY Downstate that is connected to a public input process, to ensure the impacted community members and workers will have a say in the future of this critical institution.

"The failings of this part of the budget are largely in what was not included. It is unjustifiable that my Coverage For All proposal was excluded and that we have left hundreds of millions of dollars and savings off the table. While we are expanding the Essential Plan to include our State's DREAMers, we need to do more to bring funds to safety net institutions. With the 1332 waiver, New York could have saved hundreds of millions by offering health coverage to New Yorkers that are dependent on emergency Medicaid for care rather than having access to less costly, preventive health services. The administration's decision not to seek federal funds to cover this population is not only devastating for immigrant New Yorkers, but fiscally irresponsible."

### **SENATE DISTRICT 33**

"This budget allocates funding for many local initiatives and organizations serving my Bronx constituents including legal and social services for vulnerable communities and landmark cultural institutions, as well as securing once again state funding for the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory."

“For hunger relief, as Health Chair and as a proud Bronx public servant, I worked hard to restore the unjustifiable proposed cuts by the Governor to critical emergency food programs. We secured an increase in funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance program of over \$23 million and for Nourish NY by over \$4 million for a total of over \$112 million for these essential programs.”

### **District Funding Highlights:**

- Reappropriates \$100.5 million exclusively for the development of the Kingsbridge Armory.
- Restored all cuts to bring \$30 million to our city’s ZBGA institutions, including the New York Botanical Garden and Bronx Zoo.
- For public schools, Foundation Aid increased by \$934 million statewide, a 3.9% increase over last year and a 1.8% increase over the Executive’s initial proposal. The Senate also continued its commitment to school meal access with \$180 million.
- \$140,000 for Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortland Development Corporation.
- \$100,000 for Bronx Legal Services.
- \$350,000 for Part of the Solution (POTS).
- \$250,000 for Mosholu Montefiore Community Center.
- \$89,425 for NMIC Legal Services.
- \$140,000 for The HOPE program.
- \$250,000 for the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center.
- \$438,885 for various programs of MFJ Legal Services.

### **HOUSING**

“We should have protected every tenant, but new policies will give many more tenants a chance to challenge threats of eviction that destabilize our housing market. Thanks to the leadership of the Senate Majority Conference, we are passing critical Good Cause Eviction protections for many tenants in unregulated units. These protections will help tenants stand up to corporate landlords and unscrupulous building owners that artificially drive up rents.

My team and I are concerned about the increase of the Individual Apartment Increase threshold to up to \$50,000 jeopardizing hard-earned rights and security, so we will be vigilant in empowering and protecting the tens of thousands of rent-

regulated tenants in my district who may be affected by this policy. There are far too many bad actors whose business strategy depends on neglecting property maintenance, forcing tenants out of apartments, and jacking up rents in an effort to cash in on bloated, speculative valuations.

It should be of great concern to every New Yorker that the housing market's runaway rent hikes are drastically increasing homelessness and poverty. Our responsibility is to address affordability and protect tenants in our state, not the real estate industry's profits."

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

"When we passed the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, we committed to fulfill the law's primary purpose of delivering social and economic equity for Black and Brown communities after decades of targeted criminalization. The reality is that current CAURD and Social Equity licensees are facing competition from unlicensed cannabis shops without the financial and technical support promised in the law. With this budget, we will be able to assertively close unlicensed shops selling illicit cannabis within a civil enforcement framework, and help to boost our nascent legal cannabis industry.

"There are so many retail shops and small businesses in my district and we can all agree that retail workers should feel protected. There has been a lot of coverage of retail theft incidents across New York, leaders should not be fear mongering and contributing to the fears New Yorkers have about public safety. This budget will include tax relief for retail and commercial stores to enhance their store's security, but it is critical that we don't fall into the trap of increasing criminalization as a solution when we need to invest in our communities to increase economic stability."

## **CLIMATE JUSTICE**

"Our entire borough feels the impact of environmental injustice and we must do everything in our power to transition to renewable energy and address the climate crisis. The Senate successfully restored \$250 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Grant program for a total of \$500 million as we welcome the first-ever federal limits on toxic PFAS forever chemicals in drinking water. This budget also includes a sales tax exemption on the installation of residential energy storage systems for two years, which will help keep costs down for consumers and make it easier for them to upgrade and electrify their homes. I look forward to working with

the Senate Majority to pass meaningful legislation like the NY HEAT Act before this session ends.”