



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

## Senator Webb Highlights Affordability Efforts Passed in 2024 Session

LEA WEBB August 1, 2024

| ISSUE: **AFFORDABILITY**



**Made strides to lower every day costs for New Yorkers**

**Binghamton, NY** - During the 2024 Legislative Session, State Senator Lea Webb supported efforts to reduce everyday costs and make New York a more affordable place to call home. These efforts include reducing the cost of prescriptions, limiting junk and bank fees, and controlling utility costs, as well as providing funding for food access and establishing medical debt protections.

Senator Webb proudly cosponsored 10 bills that passed this session geared towards increasing affordability for New Yorkers, including legislation creating the Wholesale Prescription Drug Importation Program, requiring re-enrollment in the HEAP program, easing cancellation of contracts and health club memberships, and controlling utility cost increases.

"This legislative session, I fought to address the needs of working families, particularly those in the rural areas of the Southern Tier," **said Senator Lea Webb.** "I am proud of the strides we made to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, including making New York the first state in the nation to eliminate co-payments for insulin under all commercial health insurance plans. We also passed critical legislation to hold utility companies accountable and addressed fees that place undue burdens on families. My focus remains on fostering prosperity and safeguarding our community from predatory practices that threaten their financial security."

This year's legislative achievements to support every day affordability included:

- **Fighting Unfair Fees:**

- **New York Junk Fee Prevention Act:** This bill, [S7783B](#), sponsored by Senator Gianaris, requires sellers to display the total price of a good or service, including all mandatory fees.
- **Prohibiting Benefit Banking Services Fees:** This bill, [S2601B](#), sponsored by Senator Hoylman-Sigal, prohibits fees for benefit cards, including for Unemployment Insurance benefits.
- **Credit Card Service Charge Cap:** This bill, [S363](#), sponsored by Senator Thomas, sets a cap on the credit service charge computed and collected on a retail installment contract

equal to the state civil usury rate. This will maintain the convenience of installment credit while preventing predatory interest practices.

- **Holding Utilities Accountable & Making them more Affordable:**

- **Requires Accurate Meter Readings:** This bill, [S1851B](#), sponsored by Senator Hinchey, protects ratepayers from excessive billing fluctuations due to estimated utility meter readings.
- **Protects Residential and Commercial Utility Customers during PSC Investigations:** This bill, [S6803B](#), sponsored by Senator Gonzalez, prohibits late fees, interest, penalties or disruption of utility services during a PSC investigation.
- **Home Energy Assistance Automatic Re-enrollment:** This bill, [S2496](#), sponsored by Senator Mannion, requires automatic re-enrollment for households receiving assistance through the low-income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).
- **Utility Hikes Economic Impact Consideration:** This bill, [S2432](#), sponsored by Senator Comrie, requires the PSC to consider the economic impact of further rate increase so that the utility's needs for the requested raise would be weighed against the ability of its customers to obtain affordable service.
- **Limits Fixed Utility Charges:** This bill, [S1303B](#), sponsored by Senator Parker, limits the fixed charges that residential consumers pay on their utility bills so they are only charged for the costs directly related to their energy use.

- **Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs**

- **Wholesale Prescription Drug Importation:** This bill, [S604](#), sponsored by Senator Skoufis, creates a state program to import prescription drugs from other countries to reduce costs.

- **New York State Affordable Drug Manufacturing Act:** This bill, [S4786A](#), sponsored by Senator Rivera, directs the Commissioner of Health to enter into partnerships to reduce the cost and increase the availability of prescription drugs.
- **Prescription Drug Supply Chain Transparency Act:** This bill, [S6738A](#), sponsored by Senator Myrie, requires Pharmacy Services Administrative Organizations, switch companies, and rebate aggregators to register with the Department of Financial Services and disclose certain ownership and activity information, so that New Yorkers can begin to see where and when intermediaries are profiting off unfair price hikes.

The FY 2025 State Budget included the following wins for affordability:

- **Free Insulin:** First state in the nation to eliminate co-payments for insulin under all commercial health insurance plans.
- **Medical Debt Protections:** Includes increasing the eligibility threshold for financial assistance, requiring the Department of Health to establish minimum collection policies and procedures and a uniform financial assistance application form for all hospitals, ensuring that immigration status cannot be used as a criterion for financial assistance eligibility, and clarifies that provisions on medical credit cards apply to both hospitals and other health care providers. It also requires that hospitals include demographic information on the patients who are applying for medical assistance.
- **\$50 million** for customers enrolled in the NYSEERDA EmPower+ Program to electrify their homes, which will provide subsidies to guarantee such customers do not spend more than 6% of their income on their electric bill.

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