



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senate Democrats Reject Cuts; Urge Progressive Action In Budget Letter

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 14, 2018

| ISSUE: **NYS BUDGET, DREAM ACT, DREAMERS, CHILD VICTIMS ACT, GUN LEGISLATION**

(Albany, NY) Senate Democrats unveiled a comprehensive budget letter detailing conference priorities for the 2018-2019 State Budget. These requests include fiscal proposals as well as policy initiatives that will protect working families from the Republican Tax Plan and move New York State forward. The Republican Majority has already refused to advance many of these proposals through the State Senate, but Senate Democrats hope their inclusion in the State Budget will ensure they are enacted.

“With Donald Trump in the White House and Washington dominated by forces opposed to New York values, we have a responsibility to use the State Budget to enact real reforms for our state’s residents,” Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “We need to modernize the criminal justice and electoral systems, implement protections against sexual harassment, pass the Child Victims Act and DREAM Act, make healthcare more accessible and affordable, and finally confront gun violence with common sense protections. The Senate Democrats have laid out an ambitious agenda, and we will continue to demand real action and meaningful reforms are included in the enacted budget.”

Senate Democratic Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Budgets are statements of values and Senate Democrats are fighting to ensure New York remains the progressive leader of the

nation. I am proud that our priorities include several of my proposals, including eliminating cash bail, automating voter registration, and creating a recurring revenue stream for the MTA. By properly investing in our future, we are giving New Yorkers a better tomorrow.”

Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Liz Krueger said, “Our state budget is not just about paying our bills on time; it is a critical policy document that affects the lives of all New Yorkers. That’s why it is so important for Senate Democrats to be included in the decision-making process. My Democratic colleagues and I have outlined a set of priorities that will grow our economy and improve the quality of life for hard-working families across our state, to ensure that everyone can benefit from our shared prosperity. New York must continue to defend the fundamental rights of all people, provide a level playing field of growing opportunity, and protect the safety and health of all our communities.”

Senate Democratic Policy Group Chair Brad Hoylman said, “The budget recommendations from the Senate Democratic Conference put New York first by defending our state from the punitive and unfair policies of Trump and Congress that will do incalculable damage New York’s economy, environment and human capital. I hope our colleagues in the Republican Senate see the wisdom in adopting these recommendations and prioritize New York ahead of any political considerations coming out of Washington.”

The Senate Democratic Conference’s policy priorities include:

Combatting sexual harassment in both the public and private sector; Reforming and modernizing New York State’s criminal justice system; Passing the Child Victims Act; Increasing access to affordable, quality health care; Passing the DREAM Act; Common sense anti-gun violence legislation; and Passing strong voting and ethics reforms to earn the public’s trust.

The Senate Democratic Conference's fiscal priorities include:

Decoupling the State's tax code from the Federal tax code in areas impacted by 2017 Federal tax reform in order to protect New York taxpayers from unnecessary and unfair tax increases. Rejecting redirecting NYC property taxes to the MTA via value capture without NYC approval. Providing School Districts with additional school aid and committing to phasing-in the foundation aid formula over three years. Restoring cuts to the various opportunity programs to make college more affordable. Fully funding efforts to close the wage gap and support non-profits by adding \$88 million for wage increases for the employees of the state's human service providers. Supporting the One Fair Wage campaign and eliminating the tipped worker sub-minimum wage. Supporting the Executive's proposal to fund a \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund. Directing \$50 million in new funding for the Small Business Revolving Loan Fund. Increasing funding for local government assistance to end the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) Base Level Grant Funding freeze.

To review the Senate Democratic Conference's budget priorities letter to Senate Republican Majority Leader John Flanagan, please see below.

Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), said, "The Senate Democrats' education priorities put the emphasis where it should be: preserving direct classroom resources and protecting the state's most vulnerable populations. We support the Conference's call for additional school aid and for a three-year plan to phase in the foundation aid formula that includes a set-aside for school districts with large numbers of English language learners. We also support their call to invest in the state's Community Schools initiative and in high-quality professional development through Teachers Centers in New York City and across the state."

Andy Pallotta, President of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), said, “We appreciate the Senate Democrats’ support for a robust increase in school aid and more charter accountability. NYSUT also supports the conference’s call for a full phase-in of foundation aid; its additional investment toward helping English language learners and more money for Teacher Centers and other professional development opportunities. This is a budget blueprint that would help our public schools continue the progress they have made.”

Minister Kirsten John Foy, Northeast Regional Director for the National Action Network, said, “The Democratic Conference’s budget letter reflects the moral and political leadership needed in New York and across the country at this time. From her commitment to dismantling the cradle to prison pipeline, to the corporate cash to campaigns pipeline, to the iron pipeline flooding our street with guns, conference leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins is exercising the moral and political leadership needed to protect our families from a runaway justice system, or our democracy from being auctioned off to the highest bidder and most importantly keeping our children and educators safe from the scourge of gun violence and keeping them alive in school. This letter represents the conscience of New Yorkers across our great state.”

Mario Cilento, President of the NYS AFL-CIO, said, “Our mission is to improve the lives of working men and women in New York and this statement of budget priorities includes many of our shared goals to do just that. These priorities provide a framework to ensure working men and women are treated fairly in the workplace and have an opportunity for a brighter future that includes a higher standard of living and improved quality of life.”

Hector Figueroa, President of 32BJ, said, “The Senate Democratic Conference’s budget proposal reflects a strong commitment to supporting working families, strengthening our democracy, and protecting New York State from attacks by the federal government. We especially applaud efforts to strengthen immigrant communities’ access to legal defense

services and higher education, implement early voting, achieve comprehensive bail reform, and commit the state to a 100% renewable energy future that supports workers and front line communities. We urge our legislative leaders in both houses and the Governor to implement a final budget that reflects these values.”

Wayne Spence, President of the New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF), said, “At a time when labor unions are under constant attack, it is gratifying to know the members of the Senate Democratic Conference recognize the value of the hardworking women and men I represent by supporting many of PEF’s budget priorities, including rejecting proposals for the expansion of design-build, retiree healthcare cuts, OITS term appointment language and failure to provide full one-year closure of the Ella McQueen OCFS facility. Passage of these proposals in the 2018-19 Executive Budget would result in the diminishment of the quality services New Yorkers need and deserve – services provided by the highly qualified state employees PEF represents.”

Bob Master, CWA District 1 Political Director, said “We cannot continue judging the success of the economy based on how much money corporations and those at the top are pulling in. Hedge fund managers were showered with a trillion dollar tax cut even and yet working people are supposed to be grateful for a couple more dollars in their paychecks? This is unacceptable, and CWA supports efforts that will ensure that Wall Street and big banks pay their fair share, including closing the carried interest loophole and extending and expanding the millionaire’s tax.”

William Whalen, Associate Director of the AFSCME District Council 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services program, said, “As Associate Director in AFSCME District Council 37’s Municipal Employees Legal Services program, I am proud to provide our 125,000 members and 57,000 retirees with legal services to help them in the most important of places, the home. The Public Utility Law Project gives a training in Consumer Utility Rights that all

attorneys and advocates who assist working people need to get: information on the rights that can help keep them in warm, well-lit homes where their children can get computer access to their homework and our members can contact ailing parents. No other social service organization I've met in my more than 15 years in this field has the depth and expertise PULP has in this crucial area. I vigorously support their request for additional funding this year."

James Cahill, President of the New York State Building and Construction Trades Council, said, "We thank the Senate Democratic Conference for including an important proposal to clearly define 'public work' and provide prevailing wages to hard-working construction workers. It's critical that this year's budget includes language to protect New York's construction workers. We need a clear definition of 'public work' so that the prevailing wage is required on projects that receive taxpayer resources. The State's current economic development scheme undermines New York's construction workers and allows these projects to be completed with no accountability. The better approach to economic development is a model that supports the quality craftsmanship and increased buying power associated with a prevailing wage. This approach supports good-paying jobs for New Yorkers, strengthens the economy, and provides a pathway to the middle class through apprenticeship training and workforce diversification practices."

Robin Chappelle Golston, President & CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts, said, "With the Trump administration's refusal to grasp the devastating reality of what health care cutbacks mean to women and their continuous attempts to block access to reproductive health care, we need this strong support for a sound public policy that protects those who need it most. We applaud the Senate Democratic Conference for standing up for New Yorkers."

Dr. Charles Rothberg, President of MSSNY, said, “We thank the Senate Democratic Conference for opposing several of the problematic provisions in the Executive Budget that would reduce the ability of patients to continue to receive needed care from their physicians, including opposing cuts to patient centered medical homes, burdensome medication pre-authorization requirements, and corporate/insurance company owned ‘retail clinics’ that will harm patient access to physician-led medical homes. The answer to the Budget deficits New York faces should not be to make it harder for patients to be treated by a physician.”

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates of New York, said, “The Senate Democratic Conference budget blueprint calls for healthier people, cleaner communities, and a commitment to a just and equitable economy powered by clean, renewable energy. That is exactly the kind of leadership New Yorkers need and deserve. We applaud the Senate Democratic Conference for prioritizing actions that protect and enhance clean water initiatives, pollution clean-ups, investments in clean transportation, and strong climate action through the enactment of the Climate and Community Protection Act – policies that must be adopted within the final budget to truly make the future of New York a priority.”

Marcia Bystryn, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters, said, “As the federal government retreats from protecting our environment, it is more important than ever for state leaders to step up to protect New Yorkers. We applaud the Senate Democrats’ support for the Governor’s proposals to divert food waste from landfills, fund the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 million, reform the State’s forestry management tax credits, double funding for the Farm to School program, invest in energy storage and offshore wind, and build 10,000 electric vehicle charging stations by 2021. We are also pleased to see the Senate Democrats continue to support last year’s historic investment in clean water, reject the deferment of Brownfield Tax Credits and redirection of RGGI funds, and

raise the important issues of reliable funding for the MTA and investments in electric buses.”

Jess Wisneski, Deputy Director of Citizen Action of New York, said, “The Senate Democrats recognize the urgent need to reform our voting and campaign finance systems so that all of us have the ability to participate meaningfully in the democratic process. We also commend their support for the Climate and Community Protection Act, which--when coupled with a corporate polluter fee--will go a long way toward mitigating the catastrophic effects of climate change. Citizen Action of New York calls on Majority Leader Flanagan to include these proposals in the final Senate budget.”

Eddie Bautista, Executive Director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance, and a leader of the state-wide NY Renews coalition, said, “The Climate and Community Protection Act not only sets New York on a path to 100% renewable energy economy-wide, it prioritizes funding for the communities most vulnerable to climate change, and helps ensure that the clean energy transition will generate thousands of good, middle-class jobs right here in New York. The Senate Democratic Conference has shown real climate leadership by including the bill in their budget letter. It is critical that this legislation gets passed in 2018.”

Jasmine Gripper, Legislative Director at the Alliance for Quality Education, said, “At a time when New York ranks 49th in education equity, students need state leaders to commit to education justice. The New York State Senate Democrats have put forward an education agenda that commits to funding the Foundation Aid formula to ensure all students would have access to quality education. This commitment is a necessary step in order to end educational racism and the systemic underfunding of schools in Black, Brown and low income communities.”

Dr. Bernadette M. Kappen, Chair of the 4201 Schools Association and Executive Director of the New York Institute for Special Education, said, “The 4201 Schools Association appreciates



the Senate Democratic Conference's support of our schools, which work every day to ensure high quality educational opportunity to students with low incidence disabilities. We rely on state assistance in order to provide students with the tools needed to achieve academic, physical, and social success - leading to a lifetime of independence and purpose."

Michael Kink, Executive Director of the Strong Economy For All Coalition, said, "On key tax and budget issues, the Senate Democratic Conference is making things crystal clear: they'll work to protect regular New Yorkers, and they'll ask Wall Street billionaires to pay their fair share. It's not right for wealthy hedge fund managers to pay a lower tax rate than teachers and truck drivers, and it's great that Senate Democrats will be working with Governor Cuomo and other lawmakers to close the carried interest loophole in this year's state budget."

Rachel Fee, Executive Director of the New York Housing Conference, said, "The New York Housing Conference applauds the Senate Democrats for a budget that upholds their longstanding commitment to affordable housing. By allocating \$500 million in critically needed funds to preserve public housing, they recognize that safe and decent living conditions for NYCHA residents is a social justice issue that NY State must help address. We also thank them for opposing tax credit deferments, which unfairly change the rules for affordable housing investors. Private sector investment is essential to building and presenting affordable housing across our state."

The #bFair2DirectCare Campaign said, "We applaud Senate Democratic Leader Stewart-Cousins and the Senate Democratic Conference for recognizing that direct care workers deserve a living wage sooner rather than later and for including the spin up funds in their budget resolution. Direct care workers serve more than 100,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities and they do it with love, caring and the utmost professionalism. It is crucial that the bipartisan support #bFair2DirectCare has enjoyed continues this year and

that the Governor and Legislature include funding in this year's budget."

Jennifer Jones Austin, Executive Director and CEO of FPWA, said, "On behalf of FPWA and the Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York coalition, we thank the Senate Democratic Conference for their call to invest in the nonprofit human services workforce and infrastructure. Nonprofits stand with our communities each and every day, and we appreciate the Conference for standing with us to ensure they can continue their critical work."

Allison Sesso, Executive Director of The Human Services Council, said, "The Human Services Council applauds the Senate Democratic Conference for their continued support of the human services sector; a crucial industry that so many New Yorkers from all walks of life rely on to better their lives and communities. The inclusion of \$100 million for the Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Investment Program (NICIP) is a huge recognition that the sector needs to be better supported to deliver quality services as a partner with government. The rejection of the COLA deferral is an important step in recognizing that our workforce – who work under government contract – cannot continue to go without essential cost-of-living increases, particularly when our workforce is already underpaid. We thank the Conference for making our communities and the organizations that create opportunities for all of us a priority in this budget."

Sean Hill, Senior Legal Fellow, Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice, said, "We applaud the Senate Democrats for introducing a criminal justice package that will restore justice and fairness to pretrial practices across New York State. The bail bill, S.3579-A, will facilitate drastic reductions in pretrial detention rates, while ensuring low-income communities of color do not have to bear the costs of any conditions set by the court. The speedy trial bill, S.7006-B, will ensure individuals are brought to trial swiftly, while the discovery bill, S.7722, will ensure that no one remains blindfolded to the evidence against them. We strongly

encourage the Senate to adopt this criminal justice reform package as part of its budget, to address the race and wealth disparities plaguing our criminal justice system.”

Erin L. George, #FREEnewyork Campaign Coordinator, JustLeadershipUSA, said, “Thousands of legally innocent New Yorkers are trapped in jails across the state, unable to afford the price that’s been set on their freedom and left in the dark about the evidence against them. For many, the situation only gets worse, as they are forced to endure the inhumane torture of solitary confinement. New York’s jail crisis must be addressed head-on, which is why JustLeadershipUSA’s campaigns - shaped and driven by directly impacted people and communities from across the state - demand groundbreaking overhaul of our criminal justice system. JustLeadershipUSA strongly supports Senate Democrats’ leadership in calling for overhaul of bail (S.3579-A), discovery (S.7722) and solitary confinement (S.4784-A) laws. We urge the Legislature and Governor to support these bills and help ensure that liberty, Due Process rights and dignity are prioritized and preserved in our justice system. This is the reform that New Yorkers deserve and support.”

Lisa Schreibersdorf, Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services, said, “Brooklyn Defender Services is grateful to the Senate Democratic Conference for standing up for real criminal justice reform on the critical issues of bail, discovery, speedy trial, and solitary confinement. I truly believe that, together, impacted New Yorkers, advocates, defenders, and allied legislators can win meaningful and lasting change for the people we represent and their families.”

Justine Olderman, Executive Director of The Bronx Defenders, said, “We applaud the Senate Democratic Conference’s strong commitment to meaningful, comprehensive criminal justice reform. We can no longer accept a bail system that creates and reinforces wealth- and race-based disparities and feeds mass incarceration; a speedy trial law that allows cases to languish without a realistic opportunity to have one’s day in court; or a discovery law that

deprives the accused of access to the most basic information about the case against them. The time is now for New York to be a true leader in the national movement to shrink jails and bring fundamental fairness to our pretrial justice system.”

Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society, said, “To put it simply, New York State’s current criminal justice system is broken and destroys the presumption of innocence. The injustice of cash bail and racially disparate pre-trial detention has long plagued those trapped at local jails simply because they do not have money to make even the lowest bail sets. Reform cannot wait any longer, and the Senator Democratic Conference’s bail proposal will deliver the breadth of change needed. The Legal Aid Society lauds Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing this critical issue, and we urge the rest of Albany to support bold criminal justice reforms this session.”

Victor Pate, Statewide Organizer for the NYCAIC #HALTsolitary Campaign, said, “The New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) applauds the Senate Democratic Conference for including the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, S. 4784A / A. 3080B, and other urgent changes to the criminal justice system, in its budget letter. Thousands of New Yorkers remain in solitary confinement each day, for months, years, and decades. New York must pass HALT this session to end this torture for all people and create more humane and effective alternatives.”

Todd Schulte, President of FWD.us, said, “Recent polling shows that New Yorkers support bold pretrial reforms that will ensure pretrial jail is a last resort, set firm speedy trial limits, and allow people to see the evidence against them before they plead guilty. We applaud the efforts of Senate Democrats and other lawmakers in Albany to make these proposals a reality during the 2018 legislative session.”

Nick Sifuentes, Executive Director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, said, “With the L train shutdown looming, we’re glad to see Senate Democrats recognizing the importance of expanding the MTA’s electric bus pilot to 14th Street. EV buses can reduce pollution, maintenance costs, and out-of-service downtime, and the MTA should ramp up testing and deployment on 14th Street and beyond. We’re also heartened to see Senate Democrats propose additional funding for upstate and suburban bus and rail systems, which need additional capital to maintain and expand their networks. Transportation is now the leading sector contributing to climate change. If we are going to change that, we will need to expand public transit in communities across the state so that more New Yorkers have access to affordable, convenient bus and rail options.”

Kate Breslin, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, said, “Thank you to the Senate Democratic Conference for recognizing the damage a cap on funding for NYC’s child welfare services could have on New York children, and rejecting the proposal to instate that cap. While the proposal targets New York City only, it would set a dangerous precedent for future caps based on the Governor’s perception of county capacity and willingness. Now, as ever, New York should be working across sectors to shore up systems that strengthen families and give children the building blocks for a bright future. We urge the Legislature and the Governor to reject this proposal in the final budget.”

Susan Constantino, President & CEO of Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State (CP of NYS), said, “We greatly appreciate that the New York State Senate Democrats recognize the critical need to provide our special education schools with an additional \$14.7 Million in funding to begin to mitigate the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. We also want to thank them for recommending that our 4410 and 853 schools receive the same percentage increase in funding as the public, charter and private schools. These investments will begin to provide financial stability for New York’s special education schools. We remain hopeful

that both Houses of the New York State Legislature will join the Senate Democrats to ensure that this funding is in the final State budget so that we can continue to provide New York's most vulnerable children with special needs a free and appropriate public education."

Sandy Myers, Vice President, External Affairs and Communications, Selfhelp Community Services, said, "On behalf of the 20,000 older New Yorkers served by Selfhelp Community Services, I want to thank the Senate Democratic Conference for their support of affordable senior housing service coordinator funding, as well as funding for services for Holocaust survivors. With an over 80-year history supporting older New Yorkers, both programs are key to enabling the independence and dignity of our clients as they age. Recent research conducted by Selfhelp found improved health outcomes and considerable cost savings to Medicaid for residents living in our senior affordable housing. A \$10 million investment statewide will allow for the model to be expanded throughout the State, and for these outcomes to be achieved more broadly. Additionally, as the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors, we are also grateful for the Senate's support for services to this population. Approximately 50% of the survivors served by Selfhelp are living at or below the poverty line. With the needs of this population growing more intense, the cost of care continues to grow, and investment by government is key to enabling us to fulfilling our commitment to serve as the last surviving relative to every survivor of the Holocaust."

James Parrott, Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies, Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, said, "Early childhood education rightfully is one of New York's highest priorities. Thank you to the Senate Democratic Conference for proposing \$100 million in new investment for child care. It is essential for the State to increase general fund investment and use economic development funding to increase the availability of child care subsidies so that parents can more fully engage in paid employment, and importantly, raise

reimbursement rates and provide direct assistance to more centers and providers so that they can pay early childhood educators wages at least commensurate with a rising state minimum wage.”

Lisa Caswell, Blue Carreker, Dede Hill, co-facilitators, Empire State Campaign for Child Care, said, “New York State ranks among the most expensive states for child care in the nation, with the average cost of care exceeding \$14,000 a year. We established a system to help low income working families meet these high costs but we have not adequately funded that system. As a result, more than 80% of families who earn less than 200% of poverty are denied this assistance, and are left to drop out of the work force or to patch together unreliable and sometimes unsafe arrangements. Further, the workforce caring for our youngest children – overwhelmingly made up of women – receive such low salaries that nearly 60% of child care workers’ families in New York are forced to participate in some type of public assistance. Thank you to the Senate Democratic Conference for proposing a \$100 million new investment in child care to 1) expand the number of children served by increasing subsidy funding and 2) fund an increase in the market rate formula so providers can meet rising costs, including the increasing minimum wage.”

Bernhard Meyer, President of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSAOTSOH), said, “NYSAOTSOH’s more than 932 local highway officials are thankful for the Senate Democratic Conference proposal to restore last year’s appropriation of Extreme Winter Recovery Funding and an additional increase in the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program; totaling \$150 million. Localities are responsible for 87% of the state’s roads and over half of its bridges. We appreciate the support of all our partners in the legislature who recognize that this additional funding is critical – as all of our homes, schools and businesses are connected via local roads and bridges.”

Gregory Brender, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses and Chair of Winning Beginning NY, said, “High-quality early childhood education programs are a necessity for New York’s families. But too many families are waiting on wait lists and too many providers are struggling to pay their staff a living wage. Winning Beginning NY applauds the Senate Democratic Conference for calling on the State to increase its investment in early childhood education by \$100 million and we look forward to working to ensure this crucial proposal is included in this years’ budget.”

Louise Tarantino, Senior Attorney for the Empire Justice Center, a DAPWorks Campaign member, and a Statewide Coordinator of the program, said, “The DAPWorks Campaign thanks Senate Democratic leadership for recognizing the importance of funding for the Disability Advocacy Program, or DAP. Low income persons with disabilities often face homelessness if they cannot successfully access federal disability benefits. DAP helps stabilize the lives of disabled New Yorkers by providing representation in the complex process required to qualify for Social Security disability benefits. Successful outcomes in these cases also helps save money for the State and local counties. Support for full funding in the final enacted budget brings us closer to ensuring that DAP providers will be able to continue this important work.”

Timothy Kremer, Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), said, “The New York State School Boards Association supports full funding of expense-based aid for 2018-19, without the introduction of an arbitrary cap on expense reimbursements regardless of need. We also oppose proposals related to charter schools in the governor’s budget, which are intended to divert funding from New York City public schools to charter schools. Finally, the archaic mechanism for funding Special Act school districts should be replaced once and for all so that these districts are financially supported in a manner that is fair and predictable.”



Mary Beth Labate, President of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, said, “On behalf of New York’s more than 100 private, not-for-profit colleges and universities, I commend these student-focused higher education policy proposals. Restoring funding for Bundy Aid and opportunity programs and expanding the STEM Incentive and Masters-in-Education scholarship programs so all New York students can benefit are critical steps toward making higher education more affordable and more accessible. These measures will preserve the state’s compact with students for whom a private, not-for-profit college is the ideal choice.”

Brenda Episcopo, President of United Way of New York State, said, “2-1-1 New York and the United Way of New York State is grateful for the support for 2-1-1, which is a critical service that touches the lives of all New Yorkers. With more than 2 million live calls and 18 million web searches, we know that 2-1-1 is a great return for New York’s investment. Funding from New York State is critical to ensuring this service is available to all New Yorkers, 24/7, throughout the year.”

Alan Mucatel, Executive Director of Leake and Watts Services, Inc., said, “Proper funding is vitally important to sustain all the progress we have made in child welfare and juvenile justice. We urge everyone to support this important investment in the future, not just for our children, but for our entire community.”

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said, “This year’s budget requests contain landmark programs that will propel New York into the millennium with cleaner and healthier communities. Protecting our water, redirecting food waste to those in need, continuing to upgrade antiquated sewage infrastructure and advancing solar and wind energy are not only good for our environment, they pave the path forward for our state to succeed and thrive in the years ahead. We look forward to strong agreement on these critical issues and thank those that continue to champion these

essential needs.”

Samuel Chiera, Caitrin Coccoma, Joanna Paine, and Austin Refuerzo, of Brooklyn Legal Services, said, “As staff attorneys in the Preserving Affordable Housing Program of Brooklyn Legal Services of New York Corporation A (Corp A), we are writing to express our support for additional funding for the Public Utility Law Project of NY (PULP). Brooklyn A is a nonprofit organization in North Brooklyn that provides free legal services to low- and moderate-income members of the community. Our clients face daily threats to their housing, including harassment from landlords, repair problems, deprivation of essential services, and eviction. Problems with utilities such as heat and electricity are common among our clients, and the training, advice, and assistance PULP offers has been critical to our work.”

Laura Felts, Homeless Prevention Program Coordinator for United Tenants of Albany, said, “UTA scheduled a training with PULP because agency housing counselors were experiencing an influx of low-income tenants who were impacted by complicated issues with their utilities. The coverage of issues was clear, detailed and tremendously useful for UTA staff. The housing counselors present at the training could not have been more pleased. The staff learned an extensive amount of information that will enable UTA to improve upon service provision when engaging with clients regarding complex utility issues.”

Clarke Gocker, Director of Policy & Initiative for People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo, said, “The Public Utility Law Project has proven to be a staunch advocate for low-income and economically vulnerable communities in Western NY. Specifically, PUSH Buffalo and its members have benefited from critical research support, constituent education, and technical assistance provided by staff attorneys at PULP during utility rate cases and other Public Service Commission proceedings that directly impact energy affordability in our region.”

Jen Rojas, Associate Executive Director, Child Care Council of Suffolk, said, “Working families on Long Island are unable to afford quality child care, and child care providers are struggling to stay open because of the lack of families who can afford their services. Quality child care on Long Island costs anywhere from \$10,000 to \$17,000 per year/per child – costing average income families at least 25% of their gross income. Yet, in Suffolk County only families below 125 percent of poverty are eligible for a child care subsidy – that is \$30,750 for a family of 4. An increase in state funding for child care will help more families access child care and increase support for child care providers, while generating a strong return on investment in our local economy.”

Bryan O'Malley, Executive Director of the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Association of New York State (CDPAANYS), said, “CDPAANYS is glad to see budget proposals that reflect the desire of people with disabilities and seniors to live in the community instead of institutions. Strong ideas need a solid foundation, and this plan incentivizes care at home over care in the institution while creating the funding structure necessary to support the workforce that allow these desires to become reality.”