



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Statement from Senator Serrano on the 2019-2020 New York State Budget

JOSE M. SERRANO April 1, 2019



"As Chair of the Senate Majority Conference I am proud that my colleagues and I, under the leadership of Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins and Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger, have passed an on-time State budget that is not only fiscally responsible, but that will provide opportunities and improve quality of life for New Yorkers across the state. During a tough fiscal year with lower than anticipated revenues, we have worked tirelessly to ensure a budget that achieves our common goals on issues like education, the environment, criminal justice reform, transportation, and public campaign finance reform.

"Every child has the fundamental right to a quality education, regardless of income or address. The enacted budget provides the largest amount of school aid in the history of our state at \$27.9 billion- a \$1 billion increase. As a long-time advocate for both education and immigrant rights, I am proud that the budget also includes \$27 million for the New York State Jose Peralta Dream Act, ensuring that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to obtain a higher education and achieve the American Dream.

"In addition to record education funding, the 2019-20 budget will also continue strong community education investments outside of schools, with over \$96 million dedicated to our public libraries and \$43 million to support local arts, museums and other cultural organizations.

"As Chair of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, I am thrilled that I successfully advocated for these proven economic engines, including \$110 million in additional State Park improvements, \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund, \$500 million in additional investment in clean water infrastructure projects, and increased funding for tourism matching grants. We were also able to double grants to volunteer organizations that help maintain our State Parks and Historic Sites.

"Earlier this year, the Senate passed historic election and criminal justice reforms. This budget furthers our election reform efforts by reducing the role of money in politics and making Public Campaign Financing a reality. This budget also includes criminal justice reforms that will eliminate cash bail for misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies, ensuring that no New Yorker is incarcerated due to their financial circumstances.

"New York's transportation infrastructure is in dire need of investment. By implementing congestion pricing, we have taken a critical step toward modernizing New York City's subway system, easing traffic congestion, improving travel times, and reducing air pollution.

"Throughout my time in government, I have maintained that more than just an eyesore, plastic bags are a major source of pollution in neighborhoods throughout the city - with New Yorkers using 23 billion plastic bags annually. For the last decade, I have been working to eliminate or reduce plastic bag use in New York and I am pleased that we have finally succeeded in enacting a statewide ban on plastic bags, making New York the third state to tackle this important environmental issue.

"The enacted State budget makes wise investments in our communities and addresses issues that will improve the lives of all New Yorkers. I thank every constituent who reached out to my office and who attended our budget forums to express their priorities during this process, and I look forward to continue working with my colleagues to address the remaining challenges of this legislative session."