



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Budget Update: A Difficult State Budget In Tough Times

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL April 2, 2020

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The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive state budget shortfall of up to \$7 billion, stretched our healthcare system to the brink, and led to mass unemployment (state jobless claims have surged to 366,000). In our Senate district alone, there has been untold harm to small businesses, the human services sector, arts and cultural institutions, our schools and mass transit.

Worst of all is the death and human suffering caused by coronavirus, including many of our friends and family. The most vulnerable have been hit hard, although no segment of our society has been spared.

With this backdrop, you can imagine the difficulty in passing a \$177 billion timely and balanced budget. However, that's what we did today by voting remotely from our Albany offices in accordance with social distancing—a testament to resilience of our democracy. But the pandemic has resulted in a major social and economic crisis, and our budget reflects this sad reality.

While there are many cuts, the 2020-21 State Budget includes \$4 billion in State emergency appropriations to directly address the pandemic. Here are some other highlights:

Budget Wins for Our Community:

- **Support for LGBTQ families & people struggling with infertility** - A bright spot in the budget is the Child-Parent Security Act, my legislation to authorize and regulate compensated gestational surrogacy agreements, giving LGBTQ families and those struggling with infertility a chance to create families in New York. (This one's personal: **My husband and I were forced to travel 3,000 miles to start our family** because New York's laws wouldn't let us.) Our new law will provide the strongest legal and health protections for women acting as surrogates—stronger than any other state in the country.
- **Banning flavored e-cigarettes** - Vaping is an epidemic among young people and, **according to the FDA**, may make them more susceptible to respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. I've been the **prime sponsor of Senate legislation** with Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal instituting a statewide ban on flavored e-cigarettes, the primary gateway for youth vaping, and am thrilled it was included in the budget.
- **New open space** - For more than 20 years, the NYPD's tow pound has occupied Pier 76 at 38th Street, which was intended to be part of the Hudson River Park. **I advocated for a provision** in the budget with the support of Community Board 4 that will finally force the tow pound to move from the pier, creating much-needed open space for the park.
- **Ending gun violence** - Early reports suggest that incidents of domestic gun violence have increased during mass quarantines. I'm pleased that the budget includes legislation based on my bill, **the Safe Homes Act**, which requires law enforcement take temporary custody of guns discovered when responding to a family offense. It also includes legislation to increase reporting of domestic violence-related convictions for gun background checks, and bans gun possession by people with out-of-state convictions.
- **Justice for domestic violence survivors** - The budget also contains **my legislation** requiring courts to consider acts of domestic violence when determining the equitable distribution of property during a divorce proceeding, protecting the assets of victims.

Budget Response to COVID-19:

- **Fighting draconian Medicaid cuts** - The Medicaid Redesign Team II had originally proposed massive cuts to hospitals across the state, including nearly \$60 million of cuts in our Senate district alone. We restored more than \$300 million of Medicaid funding and \$100 million of hospital funding, saving precious resources during the current health crisis. In addition, we protected funding for hospitals and indigent care for low-income New Yorkers, expanded access to telehealth in the Medicaid program, and established a Prescription Drug Pricing and Accountability Board to combat drug overcharges, and capped out-of-pocket insulin expenses to \$100 a month.
- **Employee and family protections** - We guaranteed sick leave of at least 5-7 days for all employees, increased unemployment insurance funding by over \$1 billion, and provided more than \$22.6 million for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and other human service programs and \$200 million in additional support for the Child Care Development block Grant to assist families affected by the pandemic, as well as added \$9.8 million to cover anticipated workers comp claims.
- **Support for mass transit** - Subway ridership has decreased by 87% and bus ridership has decreased by over 70% during the pandemic, causing MTA revenues to plummet. To help keep the system afloat, we committed \$3 billion to the MTA's capital plan and allowed the MTA access to emergency funding to offset revenue losses caused by COVID-19.
- **Education funding** - We protected our schools from budget cuts despite a massive state deficit and ensured that Foundation Aid will remain at current levels.

There was also an agreement in the budget to amend the existing bail law by expanding the number of bail eligible or qualifying offenses and creating a mechanism for repeat offenders to be assigned bail. While I'm not pleased with these changes, which seem problematic especially given the surge of COVID-19 in New York's correctional facilities, I'm glad they will

not be implemented for 90 days and include an expansion of reporting requirements to allow for review of the new law as well as analysis of racial bias within the criminal justice system.

I'm hopeful that the Senate will use our new ability to conduct proceedings remotely to continue work on my other legislation not addressed in the budget, including protecting immigrants from ICE arrests in and around courthouses, repealing the so-called "walking while trans" ban used by police to profile transgender women, outlawing untraceable ghost guns, cracking down on robocalls, and more.

If you want to review the 2020-2021 budget, [click here](#). If you have any questions, feedback or concerns about the budget or COVID-19, please contact me at 212-633-8052 or hoylman@nysenate.gov. Stay well.