



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

## SENATOR BIAGGI ISSUES STATEMENT ON THE 2021-2022 BUDGET

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI April 8, 2021

**ALBANY, NY** – This week the New York State Legislature and Executive approved the 2021-2022 State Budget that makes historic investments in education, the environment, and economic recovery. The State Budget delivers many wins for New Yorkers and brings relief in the form of tax breaks for working and middle-class New Yorkers while ensuring millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share to provide vital support for families and businesses still struggling from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**State Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester) issued the following statement:**

“For the first time in my tenure as a New York State Senator, the budget reflects the values and the needs of a majority of New Yorkers. The COVID-19 pandemic upended New York State and revealed existing cracks in our system that we can no longer ignore. Many New Yorkers in the Bronx and across the state continue to experience unemployment, severe food insecurity, and fear of eviction or foreclosure. In the wake of our recovery, New York State met the urgency of this moment and passed a budget that will provide much needed relief to our most vulnerable communities and build for a more equitable future — a testament to the tireless work of advocates and organizers who have been fighting for budget justice for years.

Notably, this historic budget commits to fully phase in Foundation Aid for our public schools over three years, expands universal pre-k for over 210 districts, closes the TAP gap in four years to provide millions of additional aid to SUNY and CUNY, and creates the first-in-the-nation Excluded Workers Fund to provide much needed relief to those who faced unemployment during the pandemic but have been ineligible for any federal or state assistance. Additionally, the budget implements the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide up to twelve months of rental assistance to eligible tenants and the COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program to assist small businesses suffering as a result of the pandemic. By asking those among us with the most to contribute a little more, New York will make meaningful investments to rebuild our communities.

But a budget is not worth the weight of the paper it is printed on if the provisions enacted are not communicated to those they are meant to serve. Accordingly, in the coming weeks my team and I will engage community leaders in District 34, to be certain that the billions of dollars in relief funds made available by this year's State Budget, reach the consciousness and doorsteps of all who are in need.

While we celebrate important progress, we must continue the fight for long-term investments to end homelessness in New York State, raise wages for home care workers, and ensure capital investments in NYCHA that our communities so desperately need. Furthermore, the wins in this budget do not negate the urgent need to pass the Budget Equity Act to rebalance the budget process once and for all.

Finally, the privilege of serving New York comes with the inherent responsibility of transparency, and I would be remiss not to mention my vote against the capital budget. I voted against the capital budget because it included \$1.3 billion to be appropriated for the Governor's Penn 15 pet project. This project will build 10 commercial real estate or luxury condo skyscrapers in midtown Manhattan, at a time when millions of commercial real estate

properties sit vacant, the number of New Yorkers facing eviction is rising, and unemployment climbs higher by the day. New Yorkers need housing that is affordable, and government resources should not be committed towards the Governor's vanity project – especially in this time of crisis.

I commend Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for their leadership in passing a budget that prioritizes the needs of all New Yorkers.”