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Good morning. I want to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to ~~testify~~ ^{speak} here today.

It's no secret that New Yorkers have faced some of the highest taxes in the country. For years as taxes got higher more people, more businesses and more jobs left our state.

There have been many causes for this problem: One of the biggest was our property taxes, ~~which~~ ^{the} Governor Cuomo and the legislature delivered on last year, enacting our State's first ever property tax cap. But for County Executives on the local level, one of the biggest burdens for our taxpayers was the increasing cost of State mandates.

Every year the State has handed us a new bill for unfunded mandates and all too often this means more pain for our taxpayers. The big ticket items, Medicaid and Pensions, have represented a growing fiscal crisis, each year becoming more unmanageable for local governments, including the County of Onondaga.

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Property taxes have gotten out of control and people are desperate for help.

There is a belief that counties are responsible for property taxes and that property taxes are not imposed by the state but in Onon. County that is no longer the case.

The public was very happy last year with the property tax cap and I applaud the effort to ^{bring discipline to local govts to reign in spending} ~~begin to solve the problem~~

but without mandate reform the cap cannot work.

In Onon. Co. our ENTIRE PROP. TAX LEVY is \$148M.

And our cost to administer ^{state} ~~your~~ programs ^{this year} is \$171M.

Those are programs over which I have no control.

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I am simply collecting property taxes and forwarding every single penny to ^{the state} ~~you~~ to pay for State Programs. Prop. Taxes in O. C. are now only paying for state programs.

Medicaid is taking the lion's share of our property tax levy. Of the 148 M Levy, \$106 M goes to pay for Medicaid alone. And people are stunned to hear that it is just our local share. The total annual cost for Medicaid in Onon. Co. alone is a staggering \$650 M.

The original mission of Medicaid is to provide health insur. for the poor and as N.Yorkers we are fully capable of meeting that responsibility.

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But medicaid in NYS has gone way beyond its original mission and become the most bloated and expensive medicaid program in the country.

It is not fair to place the costs for that program on the backs of property taxpayers.

Gov. Cuomo has taken a bold first step in capping^{the} growth of Medicaid and I believe the policy is a smart one. Because decisions are made at the state level, the state is in a position to reform medicaid and taking the responsibility to pay for its growth will be the perfect incentive for this Leg. and ones that follow to begin to reduce the costs of this program.

I'm here to ask for your support for the Gov.'s proposal

Equally important is the Governor's proposal to reshape the state's pension system. Pension costs on local governments have grown dramatically over the past years and are projected to continue skyrocketing. A new pension tier is the right choice that gives future public workers a reliable retirement plan that is cognizant of the fiscal reality facing the state. It would save New York State and local governments not including New York City \$83 billion over the next 30 years, money that can go back in the taxpayer's pocket. We cannot afford to kick the can down the road on pension reform: retirement costs are already ripping a gaping hole in the budgets of local governments. The Governor has put forward a plan that provides a sensible and reasonable solution to spiraling pension costs, and it is vital that it becomes reality.

The \$715 million of unrestricted operating aid and \$79 million in grants to promote greater efficiency included in the Executive Budget will be a huge boost for local governments. With tight budgets starting from the county all the way down, this aid will be a big support to ensure that critical services remain intact and we don't have to go back to the already overtaxed taxpayer to ask for more.

When you look at this entire relief package, you see a real plan to bring tax relief and fiscal aid to all our State's towns, villages and school districts. But what's truly remarkable is that the Governor is helping local governments manage their finances, while maintaining the State's fiscal discipline with a balanced budget that reduces spending and doesn't raising taxes. This smart, ⁺effective ~~and bold~~ actions by our Governor will make every part of our state more fiscally responsible, protecting taxpayers and encouraging more people and businesses to come and stay in New York, instead of leave.

Last year the legislature partnered with the Governor to support similarly bold ideas that reshaped our Government, from ethics to the Property Tax Cap. On the local level, we are asking the Senate and Assembly to once again work with the Governor to ensure that mandate relief through pension reform and Medicaid relief, ~~along with local government assistance~~, is finally passed.

The people of our State are looking to you to follow up on last year's strong performance by taking these next big steps and once again show the people of our State what government can do when it works for the people.

Thank you for considering my testimony ###