



Testimony
to the
**Senate Finance Committee and
Assembly Ways and Means Committee on the
Proposed 2025-26 Executive Budget for
Revenue and Taxes**

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*Representing nearly 700,000 professionals in education and health care
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Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Pretlow, honorable members of the Legislature and distinguished staff, I am Melinda Person, President of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). NYSUT represents nearly 700,000 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty and staff in higher education, professionals in education, in healthcare and retirees statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed 2025-26 New York State Executive Budget for Revenue.

Our state has vast resources to fund our schools, support our children and strengthen our communities, if we choose to access them.

New York has nearly 500,000 millionaires and 128 billionaires. Meanwhile, over 19 million New Yorkers struggle to make ends meet. The top one percent of New Yorkers, with an average income of over \$2 million, control nearly a third of the income in our state. The other 99 percent? Those New Yorkers earn an average of \$47,173. What it takes the average New Yorker all year to earn, someone in the top one percent earns by Jan. 9.

This gap is even worse when you take children into account. One in five New York children live in poverty and nearly half of all households struggle to meet their basic needs.

But we know how we can help every New Yorker.

New York can reform its tax rates for the ultra-wealthy by including the provisions contained in S.4437 (Gounardes)/A.5435 (Solages) in the enacted budget. This would impose a mere 0.5 percent increase for those making between \$5 million and \$25 million and a 0.5 percent increase for those making over \$25 million. These small changes would only affect 0.3 % of New Yorkers but will raise at least an extra \$1 billion annually for our state. In addition, NYSUT supports the Share our Wealth campaign, which includes, among other things, the extension of the Personal Income Tax surcharge on high income earners until 2032, which is proposed in the executive budget. In fact, we urge this to be made permanent.

NYSUT also supports bringing our corporate tax rate in line with neighboring and comparable states. By including the provisions contained in S.3943 (Gounardes)/A.5377 (Solages) in the enacted budget, our state can raise the corporate tax rate from 7.25 to 9 percent, which is in line with New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont and California. This could raise at least another \$1 billion annually for our state.

These proposals are not only practical – they are also popular.

Three quarters of New Yorkers support higher taxes on those making over \$5 million a year. Nearly 70 percent of New Yorkers believe billionaires should pay higher state taxes, a belief that remains supported no matter where you live in the state. Nationwide, more than 80 percent of Americans do not believe corporations or billionaires pay their fair share, a belief that a majority of Americans support, regardless of political affiliation.

Combined, these proposals could mean billions in additional revenue for our state. This will not only make New York stronger and more financially able to weather storms that come its way, but it will make our state more equitable, a better place to live and raise a family and a national leader in fighting for the public good.

Another item I would like to discuss is the creation of an educator tax credit in New York state. In a recent survey of NYSUT members, we confirmed what we've long known: educators routinely reach into their own pockets to support their students and classrooms. An overwhelming 92 percent of teachers reported spending their own money on classroom supplies like pencils, paper and books, while 83 percent purchased basic necessities like food and hygiene items for their students. More than half spent over \$500 annually, and one in five invested more than \$1,000 of their personal funds.

Our educators step up to meet these needs without hesitation — it's part of their commitment to their students' success and wellbeing. However, the financial burden shouldn't fall on their shoulders alone.

Therefore, NYSUT supports establishing a \$1,000 educator tax credit to help offset these personal expenditures. This credit would acknowledge the significant financial burden our educators' shoulder while helping to ensure they can continue supporting their students' needs. It's an investment not just in our teachers, but in the daily learning and wellbeing of students across our state.

Thank you for your time.