



10. Reinforcing the Work of Nonprofits. Local organizations assist my constituents on a daily basis. They provide essential services to those who need it the most. I am very happy to announce that I was able to secure more than \$1 million for nonprofits and organizations that provide legal services, job training, senior center services, and youth mentoring opportunities, among other programs.

11. Improving Water Infrastructure. Through the budget, the Independent Democratic Conference allocated \$2.5 billion for clean water and infrastructure initiatives, which will include \$200 million to bolster access to clean water in New York City. Clean water is not a luxury, but a necessity. We must ensure situations like the one that occurred in Hoosick Falls never happen again. The new water infrastructure program is an important step toward enriching public health across New York State.



12. A Raise for Direct Care Workers. The State's nonprofits direct caseworkers will get a raise after we agreed upon a \$55 million appropriation. Direct caseworkers take care of New York's most vulnerable citizens. They definitely deserved the raise they received.



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I am proud to report a great deal of good news that came out of this year's New York State's Budget. It was an arduous and long process, and although it is not a perfect budget, it is one that I am pleased with, as it contains several groundbreaking initiatives. I, and members of the Independent Democratic Conference, promised to deliver for all New Yorkers in the State's budget, and we fulfilled that promise. We were successful in bringing more education funding, money to protect our immigrants, increased services for those most in need among us, greater job-training programs for New Yorkers, as well as free college tuition for qualifying students at SUNY and CUNY schools.



These are some of the major budget victories:



1. Protecting Immigrants with Historic Legal Defense Funding. I, alongside my colleagues in the Independent Democratic Conference, made the largest commitment to immigrant legal aid in both New York State, and nationwide history. With an allocation of \$10 million, it is the largest amount ever allocated to assist immigrants with legal services to prevent deportation, and to assist with

the green card application process. Ultra-conservative and un-American policies originating in the White House have led to increased threats of deportation for hard-working immigrants in our District. As part of this year's budget, funding awards include \$2 million to the Hispanic Federation, \$1 million to the New York Immigration Coalition, \$4 million to the Vera Institute of Justice, and \$1 million to the Catholic Charities Community Services. In the Trump era, in my District and throughout the State, immigrants go about their daily lives with fear in their eyes. I declared the 13th Senatorial District to be "a Sanctuary District," and set up an emergency hotline for constituents who may need assistance with immigration issues (1-800-213-6385). The Independent Democratic Conference and I are also hosting "Know Your Rights" forums to discuss immigration concerns, and to inform immigrants of their rights under State and Federal Law.

2. Ending the Cycle of Mass Incarceration. Every one of us deserves a second chance in life, and this is especially true for young adults. The Independent Democratic Conference led the way and made «Raise the Age» a reality. This legislation, in this year's budget, will raise the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 in New York State -- a move that will end the persistent cycle of mass incarceration of 16- and 17- year-olds. Instead of jailing our children, we need rehabilitation services to put them on the right track to a prosperous future. With this, the majority of juveniles will have their cases heard in Family Court, and not in Criminal Court.



3. More than \$1 Billion in Foundation Aid. A quality education is essential for schoolchildren. In this year's budget, we secured a historic increase in overall school aid, a number that includes a \$700 million increase in foundation aid to public schools, bringing the annual appropriation for foundation aid to approximately \$1.1 billion. If the City of New York distributes those funds proportionally, public schools in my District stand to receive \$18.3 million.

4. Reverse Mortgage Protection. Unfortunately, reports indicate that deed theft and reverse mortgage frauds are on the rise. Reverse mortgages are often utilized by seniors, and new protections added as part of the budget include settlement conferences in cases where default was triggered by the death of the last surviving borrower. The Law now allows the last surviving spouse or successor who has a claim to ownership to engage in a settlement conference. This much-needed policy change will go a long way toward protecting homeowners, especially in East Elmhurst, Corona and Astoria areas of our District, for my constituents who are a party to a reverse mortgage agreement.



5. College Affordability. With the implementation of the Excelsior Scholarship, middle-class families and individuals earning up to \$100,000 per year, and \$125,000 once the program is completely phased-in, will qualify for free tuition at CUNY and SUNY colleges. New York is leading the way in its path to college affordability, ensuring that the American Dream continues to be within reach for more and more of young people who are seeking to complete a higher education.

6. Foreclosure Prevention Programs. We also secured a \$10 million allocation to fund services that keep people in their homes, and in their neighborhoods. More than 100,000 homeowners in the State are at risk of losing their properties due to foreclosures on their home loans. This funding will address the need to keep protecting homeowners by funding foreclosure prevention legal services, as well as counseling services to assist homeowners in their efforts to keep their properties.



7. New York City Housing Authority. Through this year's budget, we were able to allocate \$200 million to make critical repairs at New York Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings. NYCHA provides affordable housing for City residents, which includes the Woodside Houses in my District. Nobody should be forced to live in unsafe conditions, and this is true for folks who reside in public housing within New York City. It is simply unacceptable for NYCHA residents to be forced to live in 'second-class' housing and I am glad that this year's budget agreement takes a step forward in providing an equal level of housing for all.

8. Rejuvenating Communities. Funding was allocated to rehabilitate abandoned properties by establishing community gardens in low-income neighborhoods. In total, \$500,000 is destined to transform vacant properties into local green and vibrant public spaces. In a dual effort to also fight hunger, preference for community garden space will be given to gardens that donate at least 25% of their produce to food kitchens.

9. Developing Neighborhoods. To ensure that existing Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) continue to provide important services and a high quality of life for seniors, I secured a \$2 million appropriation in this year's State budget to fund their programs. A substantial number of senior citizens live in housing complexes and high-density apartment buildings, right alongside other seniors. With this funding, we offer a commonsense approach to delivering medical and quality of life programs to areas of the District with a high concentration of senior residents. Simply put, NORCs provide stability for senior citizens, and help with access to important healthcare that is always increasing in price.





New York State Senate
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