



Dear constituent,

Early this spring, the Senate, Assembly, and Governor agreed upon a \$177 billion Budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021, which began on April 1st. We faced many difficult proposals to address what was at least a \$4 billion deficit. At the start of this year, there was little (if any) indication that within a matter of weeks, tens of thousands of

New Yorkers would become ill with COVID-19. School-aged young people have been isolated at home, and tens of thousands of New Yorkers are unemployed. We have been experiencing very uncertain times. The final budget language reflected numerous tremendously difficult decisions in light of our State's growing budget deficit and the challenges of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

While I am not pleased with several final agreements contained in the thousands of pages of legislation, I am confident that my colleagues and I fought our hardest to deliver a balanced budget that mitigates some of the toughest possible outcomes. Unfortunately, the recent economic downturn and an uncertain economic future may require additional budget reductions before the end of this calendar year.

Communities of color throughout the 19th Senate District have been impacted by COVID-19 at a disproportionately higher rate than others. Our collective advocacy brought much-needed attention to the health and economic disparities that we have and continue to face. We also effectuated change following decades of fighting for civil

rights. The recent brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis has amplified a nationwide call for police reform. Here in New York, #BlackLivesMatter. Accordingly, the NYS Senate, Assembly and Governor Cuomo agreed on a sweeping law enforcement reform package, which has since been signed into law (explained on page 3).

Given New York's strong leadership in flattening the curve and significantly reducing new infections and fatalities, all regions of the State are reopening in varying phases. Provided that New Yorkers continue to work together to keep safe in our daily lives and stop the spread of COVID-19, our state will continue toward stability. Please continue to wear a mask, practice social distancing and dispose of your personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriately

I look forward to seeing and working with you out in the community as we continue to achieve safety and normalcy in New York. Remember, the services of the office are still available to you. In-person constituent services are resuming by appointment, and staff is available via telephone. You deserve to be served!

Sincerely,

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud
SD-19

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ENACTED FY 2020-2021 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET

COVID-19 Preparedness & Response

In March, New York led the nation by adopting early emergency response measures and allocating \$40 million to address COVID-19. As of March 3rd, New Yorkers becoming ill from COVID-19 (or required to isolate) have been guaranteed at least 5 to 7 days of paid sick leave. The Senate and Assembly worked with the Governor to bolster other programs that have assisted during the fallout:

- \$1.05 billion increase to funding for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) with a waiver of the one-week waiting period
- \$206.2 million for Workers' Compensation Benefits
- \$200 million in additional support for the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

Please see page 3 for details of additional COVID-related legislative actions.

Investing in K-12 Education

While the Enacted Budget reduces spending in nearly all areas, funding for K-12 was maintained. The Budget:

- Holds Foundation Aid harmless from reductions, and any other school aid reductions were replaced with federal CARES Act funding
- Provides a \$104 million increase in School Aid, totaling \$27.9 billion
- Provides a \$96 million increase for expense-based aid for a total of \$8.99 billion
- Provides \$10 million in new funding for student mental health support and \$1 million for civics education
- Provides \$7.8 million for Adult Literacy Education
- Maintains more than \$230 million in past years' grants to school districts for early college high schools, after-school programs, advanced courses, and other programs.

Investing in Higher Education

Education empowers communities, especially during times of crisis. The Budget funds the State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) without the need for

student tuition increases. The budget also continues support for important programs including:

- \$35.5 million for the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)
- \$6 million for the Foster Youth Success Program
- \$250,000 for the CUNY Pipeline Center
- \$900,000 for CUNY child care (\$1.7 million total) and \$549,000 for SUNY child care (\$2.1 million total).

Caring for our Seniors

The Budget provides funding for various senior programs including:

- \$28.28 million for home-delivered meals through the Wellness in Nutrition (WIN) program
- \$4 million for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)
- \$4 million for Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NNORCs)
- \$2.4 million for the Settlement House initiative
- \$450,000 for the Holocaust Survivor Initiative.

Protecting Critical Health Funding & Programs

Since last year, New York has faced a budget deficit of at least \$4 billion. In January, Governor Cuomo convened a Medicaid Redesign Taskforce (known as MRT II) to identify savings. COVID-19 then emerged as a national threat, putting a tremendous strain on the State's health care system. Since New York received federal funding under The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, there is a temporary deferral of Medicaid savings, which would have included immediate cuts to hospitals, cost-shifts to counties and local governments, and numerous 1.5% across-the-board cuts. The health budget also includes:

- \$100 per month cap on group health plan out-of-pocket costs for insulin
- Expanded access to Medicaid telehealth services
- \$102 million legislative add to mitigate the proposed \$399 million in Medicaid cuts to hospitals, plus an additional \$200 million for other programs
- A new Prescription Drug Pricing and Accountability Board to make sure that New Yorkers aren't overcharged for vital medication
- Continued funding of Community Health Advocates to ensure consumers' access to health system navigation assistance.



Uplifting Our Most Vulnerable

As a member of the Senate’s Human Services Budget Working Group, I worked with colleagues to advocate for programs serving vulnerable youth, individuals, and families living in poverty, veterans, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Youth Programs

- \$2 million in continued funding for Substance Abuse Prevention & Intervention Specialists (SAPIS) in NYC schools
- \$2 million additional for Child Advocacy Centers
- \$1.5 million for Safe Harbour services for sexually exploited youth
- \$1 million for the Fresh Air Fund
- \$100,000 for the NYPD Youth Explorers Program.

Temporary & Safety Net Assistance

- Removed the photo identification requirement for current public assistance recipients and provided for a DMV-issued ID at no cost
- We successfully stopped Medicaid cost-shifts to NYC in the immediate future. However, State reimbursements for Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and Emergency Assistance for Families (EAF) was reduced to 85%.

Supportive & Homeless Housing

- \$128 million for the Homeless Housing Assistance Program (HHAP), a \$64 million increase
- \$42.6 million for Homeless Housing Prevention Services, a \$2.8 million increase
- \$63 million for MRT (I) Supportive Housing.

Additional Social Services Restorations

- \$1.5 million for the Disability Advocacy Program (for a total of \$4.13 million State share)
- \$90,000 for the Met Council
- \$800,000 for Welfare-to-Careers programs
- \$1.2 million for United Way 211.

New Americans: the Budget continues our strong commitment to New Americans with a \$10 million Liberty Defense Fund.

Veterans: \$2.5 million for the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Services Program.

Human Services Workforce: we will continue the fight for a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

Empowering New Yorkers to Stay in Their Homes

The Budget invests \$10 million in the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP), which helps to prevent foreclosure. Bank settlement proceeds, which were exhausted in early 2019, previously funded the program.

Justice Reforms

New York continues to lead the nation in enacting long-overdue criminal justice reforms. We have built on the landmark progress made in 2019 by improving policies that will make the system fairer and equally applied in every corner of New York State. Such changes include:

Fairness in the Child Welfare System. The Legislature successfully advocated for tightening the evidentiary standard from “some credible evidence” to a “fair preponderance of evidence” when investigating allegations of child abuse and

maltreatment transmitted to the Statewide Central Register (SCR) for Child Abuse and Maltreatment. Too many parents, particularly parents of color, have been harmed by this policy.

Reporting of Domestic Violence Crimes. To ensure proper identification of domestic violence-related convictions on criminal background checks, court clerks will be required to submit conviction records to the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) within three business days. The report was previously optional. Domestic violence convictions will then be reported to the FBI for inclusion in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This new law is nearly identical to my bill S7792.

Amendments to Bail Reform. The Senate Majority Conference took a hard look at concerns raised after the 2019 bail laws went into effect in January of this year. After significant discussion, the language was included in the Enacted Budget to (1) expand the list of bail-eligible qualifying offenses, (2) create a mechanism for repeat offenders to be assigned bail, (3) expand reporting requirements, (4) provide for a comprehensive review of the efficacy of the new law and (5) provide tools to respond to racial bias in the criminal justice system. These changes address many of the substantive concerns with the new bail laws, while preserving the intent of and improvements resulting from the 2019 legislation.

Changes to Discovery Laws. The Senate listened to concerns regarding the implementation of the 2019 Discovery Changes and took action. Language in the Budget extends the initial discovery response deadline. It also provides clarification in the law to ease the burden related to discovery responses, protections for victims and witnesses, and a range of tools to enable law enforcement to respond to discovery requests while ensuring public safety.

Public Protection

While many of the priorities I advocate for that would address the scourge of gun violence did not make it into this year’s budget, we still made tremendous progress. These new policies will help prevent future gun violence and help better protect New Yorkers.

Domestic Incident-Related Firearm Confiscation (Red Flag Law). Police will now be allowed to seize firearms, rifles, and shotguns upon responding to a domestic violence incident. Police will be required to hold seized weapons for up to two years and must return seized weapons after 48 hours if there is no legal impediment to doing so. Eighteen states currently have a similar policy.

Firearm Background Checks. Possession of firearms, rifles, and shotguns will be banned for carriers with out-of-state convictions that are similar to serious offenses under New York’s Penal Law. The Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) will be required to maintain a list of out-of-state crimes that match New York’s serious offenses.

Other Notable Actions

- Investing \$3 billion in the MTA 2020-2024 Capital Plan
- \$3 billion ‘Restore Mother Nature Bond Act’
- Polystyrene food packaging and packing peanuts are banned as of January 1, 2022
- Five-year extension of the Excelsior Tax Credit Program and START-UP NY.



A discussion on the importance of investing in SNAP at the February 11, 2020, Social Services Committee Meeting.



Senator Persaud addresses advocates at the annual Supportive Housing Network of New York Lobby Day.



Senator Persaud meets constituents in the Senate Chamber.

KEY LEGISLATIVE OUTCOMES IN 2020

2020 JUSTICE AGENDA

In June, the NYS Senate passed a sweeping package of bills to address the dire need for police reform. This was a clear message that in New York, the Senate Majority Conference responded to the demands of those protesting the murder of George Floyd. New legislation to enhance policy accountability was passed, including a repeal on Civil Rights Law section 50-a, which kept police records from the public eye, a mandate for officers to provide medical attention to the people they have brought into custody, requiring body cameras for all New York State Police, and prohibiting the use of racial profiling in law enforcement. For more details on each bill that was passed in the package, see below.

S2574 (Bailey), **establishes the Office of Special Investigation within the Office of the Attorney General** with investigative authority over any incident where the death of a person is caused by an act of a law enforcement officer.

S8496 (Bailey), **repeals Section 50-a of the New York State Civil Rights Law, which had shielded the records of police officers from public scrutiny.** Repealing 50-a will help restore confidence that law enforcement officers and agencies will be held accountable for any and all misconduct.

S3253 (Parker), stipulates that the public has the **statutory right to record law enforcement officers during their interactions with New Yorkers.** It will help to ensure that the police and others engaged in law enforcement activities are accountable to the public.

S6601 (Bailey), affirms the duty of law enforcement representatives to **provide attention to the medical and mental health needs of persons in their custody.** The bill was written in response to multiple incidents where law enforcement officers have failed to provide medical attention to people in their custody, resulting in the detainee's untimely deaths.

S8493 (Parker), mandates the **New York State Police to use body cameras** while on patrol. Body worn cameras allow for an objective perspective on what transpired during a given interaction with the police.

S3595 (Parker), **establishes the Law Enforcement Misconduct Investigative Office** within the Office of the Attorney General to review and make recommendations on the operations and policies of police agencies. Considering the recent nationwide outcry on the issue of police misconduct and reform, it is necessary to have a third-party review these cases, in order to ensure a non-biased examination.

S8539 (Parker), makes a technical change to S3595, exempting agencies under

the jurisdiction of the State Inspector General, MTA Inspector General, and Port Authority Inspector General from investigatory jurisdiction of the Law Enforcement Misconduct Investigative Office within the Office of the Attorney General.

S8495 (Benjamin), aims to resolve the problem of racial profiling by prohibiting police officers from using race or ethnic profiling when stopping a New Yorker. This bill is only sponsored in the Senate at this time, it has not been signed into law.

COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

In May, the Legislature convened to pass necessary legislation in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Some of the bills the Senate passed include:

S8122 (Comrie), extends by three months to July 15, 2020, the deadline for the filing of applications and renewal applications for real property tax abatement programs.

S8419 (Kavanagh), **will provide rental assistance vouchers to landlords on behalf of tenants** who experienced a loss of income as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

S8113 (Parker), will **prohibit utility shut-offs during states of emergency related to COVID-19.** This ensures that residents are able to maintain the necessities of water, phone, gas, and electricity despite impacts from COVID-19 on their ability to pay their bills.

S8181 (May), **establishes a state disaster emergency loan program for small businesses and small not-for-profits.** The program will help ensure New York's small businesses and not-for-profit organizations remain viable after this public health crisis and have more financial options in any future crises.

2020 Woman of Distinction: Ms. Cass Johnson



Ms. Cass Johnson, RN, BSN, a graduate of The New York City College of Technology, began her career in the Infectious Disease/Medical Surgical unit of Brookdale University Hospital in 2004. She spent 6 years in that department providing compassionate care to patients diagnosed with AIDS and their family members. Ms. Johnson enjoyed the challenge, and it was at the bedside where she honed her skills.

Yearning for growth, Ms. Johnson took an internal transfer to the Surgical Intensive Care Unit in 2010. It was in the SICU where she grew even more professionally. She is loved and respected by her patients. Over the past 10 years as a critical care nurse, she has earned her certification in Trauma Nurse Core Course (TNCC) and Trauma Care after Resuscitation (TCAR).

Ms. Johnson is a hard worker, an excellent leader, a strong mentor and is well respected by her colleagues. When COVID-19 became rampant throughout NYC, Ms. Johnson stepped up to the call of action. She assisted with spearheading a new Medical Intensive Unit which was designated for COVID-19 patients. Ms. Johnson has continued to work courageously providing her patients with compassionate care.

SD19 Food Distribution

Throughout the pandemic, Senator Persaud has coordinated with local anti-hunger organizations and food distributors to bring thousands of boxes of groceries to residents across the district, including numerous NYCHA developments. These distributions have been a combined effort to help our residents maintain healthy nourishment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bottom right: Senator Persaud and Kings County District Attorney Eric Gonzalez distribute PPE.



CENSUS 2020. The Census Bureau mailed forms to every household across this State and Nation. I cannot overstate the importance of your participation in the census. Every ten years, we are required to account for each living person in the United States; this includes YOU! The census is extremely important because it determines the allocation of over \$675 billion of your federal funds among the states. This funding is for our schools, hospitals, senior centers, public transportation, roads and bridges. Even our representation in Washington, D.C. is in jeopardy as New York is on track to lose up to two Congressional members due to lack of a complete count. Unfortunately, Brooklyn is one of the worst offenders in our lack of participation, and parts of our district are at the top of that list. There is too much at stake to have this continue. The Census Bureau is required by law to keep all personal information safe and confidential. Your responses to the

census cannot be used against you by law enforcement agencies, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), or to determine eligibility for government services. Visit my2020census.gov to respond online. To respond by phone, call 1-844-330-2020.

REAL ID DEADLINE EXTENSION. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is extending the REAL ID enforcement deadline beyond the current October 1, 2020, deadline to October 1, 2021. After this, New York citizens will be required to have a Real ID-compliant driver license or photo ID for air travel within the continental United States, to enter federal buildings, military bases, and other facilities where an ID is needed for entry. Do REAL ID and Enhanced ID mean the same thing? The answer is: NO. Enhanced IDs allow U.S. citizens to reenter the country from Canada, Mexico, and some Caribbean countries, in addition to complying with the federal Real ID Act.

It is important to remember that not every Real ID is an Enhanced ID. Additional information is available via dmv.ny.gov or dhs.gov.

Upcoming Cardiovascular and COVID-19 antibody testing. In partnership with Advanced Cardiovascular Diagnostics, Assemblymember Jaime Williams and Council Member Alan Maisel, Senator Persaud is offering community testing services on a number of dates at various locations beginning Tuesday, July 7. While walk-ins are welcome, it is recommended that you reserve an appointment by visiting: <http://rpersaudjuly2123.youcanbook.me/>

Are you receiving Senator Persaud's weekly e-newsletters and alerts? To subscribe, send an email to persaud@nysenate.gov.



SENATOR ROXANNE J. PERSAUD'S

Summer 2020 Newsletter: Budget and Legislative Update

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Legislative & Policy Priorities

New Law Alert: Non-Consensual Pelvic Exams Are Now Illegal in New York: One of my top priorities in the 2019 Legislative Session was the passage and signing of S1092, which addressed the issue of non-consensual pelvic exams in teaching hospitals. This law took effect on April 4, 2020, and NY officially joined several other states that have banned this disgusting practice. Many thanks to Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages for championing this crucial legislation with me.

“Non-consensual pelvic exams are a violation of a woman’s absolute right over her body and they have remained admissible long enough; there is no place for them in New York. With this law, we finally put an end to this unethical, unacceptable practice and ensure that patients have full jurisdiction over their bodies.”

Although the 2020 Session has concluded, the Legislature will be returning to Albany

to take up time-sensitive matters to keep New York moving forward. I will continue to advocate for various policy goals, including, but not limited to:

Banning Virginity Testing (S6879): Virginity tests are reportedly common throughout the U.S. Not only are women’s and girls’ human rights violated due to this practice, but many suffer from adverse short- and long-term physical, psychological, and social consequences. Both the World Health Organization and U.N. Women have called for a global ban.

Refinancing Options for Homeowners Facing Foreclosure (S5124): Under this proposal, the foreclosing party in a residential foreclosure would be required to offer a refinancing opportunity to the mortgagor (homeowner). If a homeowner can refinance, it can help them secure a more manageable payment, and hopefully prevent foreclosure.

Addressing Community Violence. On Saturday, February 15th, fifty SD-19

constituents came to Albany to participate in the 49th Annual NYS Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators Conference, known as Caucus Weekend. During my annual Caucus Weekend open house, I hosted a meeting for a dozen SD19 youth to discuss their perspectives on community violence with Senator Luis Sepúlveda, Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, and others. I am so very proud of these young voices. See you at the 50th Annual Caucus Weekend in 2021!



Senator Persaud and constituents participating in Caucus Weekend 2020.