



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Protecting New Yorkers' Health And Values & Combating The Coronavirus Pandemic

(Albany, NY) The Senate Majority passed the 2020-2021 State Budget that addresses the needs of New York residents and businesses, especially in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Despite the anticipated long-term economic problems caused by this crisis, the Senate Majority fought to increase education aid, protect health care spending, and maintain essential services New Yorkers rely on. The enacted State Budget supports struggling taxpayers, farmers and businesses, environmental protection efforts, and local governments as they combat the COVID-19 epidemic.

“This is not the budget we had hoped to pass at the beginning of Session, or even the budget we had envisioned just a month ago,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said.** “Our state’s financial situation has been thrust into a true economic crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic. Yet even in this crisis we managed to achieve a balanced budget that includes victories for the people of New York. The Senate Majority will continue to fight for our progressive values and priorities in the months ahead.”

Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger said, “This budget is a crisis budget. It is not what we expected to be passing when we came to Albany in January, but it is what this moment calls for. Through this budget we will keep New York State solvent and functioning, and meet the needs of the present emergency. In the face of challenges the likes of which our state and our nation have not faced in generations, we will protect New Yorkers’ health, and stand up for New York students, families, and small businesses. But make no mistake – this budget is not the final word. Far from it. When the immediate crisis is over, we must take a hard look at where we stand and how we got here; we must face down the structural flaws and inequities in our society that this crisis has revealed; and we must begin to chart a path for New York in which no one is left behind or sacrificed, in which everyone pitches in their fair share, and in which we make the hard and complex decisions to ensure the future is bright for all New Yorkers.”

Protecting New Yorkers Health and Health Care Services

As New York State confronts the coronavirus pandemic, the need to protect health care spending and invest in quality medical services for New Yorkers has never been more essential. To advance those goals, the State Budget passed by the Senate Majority includes:

- Expanding access to telehealth in the Medicaid program so more New Yorkers can connect with their physical and mental health providers.
- Tobacco and vaping control regulations, including:
 - Prohibiting the retail sale of flavored vapor products, unless the product is approved

- by the Federal Food and Drug Administration through the premarket tobacco product application process;
- Prohibiting the public display of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, or vapor product advertisements near schools;
- Increasing the general penalties for selling tobacco or vape products to minors;
- Requiring disclosure of ingredients in vape products;
- Regulating dangerous carrier oils that cause vaping illnesses; and
- Creating a new education campaign regarding the dangers of vaping for school aged youth.
- Designating 13 fentanyl analogs to Schedule I controlled substances to get these drugs off the streets and protect New Yorkers.
- Authorizing the Department of Financial Services to investigate prescription drug price increases of over 50% and indications of fraud, and creating the Drug Accountability Board to participate in the investigations.
- Limiting out-of-pocket expenses for a 30 day supply of insulin to be capped at \$100.
- Establishing the Curing Alzheimer’s Health Consortium within SUNY to identify genes that predict an increased risk for developing Alzheimer’s.

Standing Up for Struggling New Yorkers

The Senate Majority understands that New Yorkers are struggling due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the economic downturn as businesses work to stay open and pay employees. To help New York taxpayers address this crisis, the 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Providing \$200 million in additional support through the Child Care Development Block Grant to assist families affected by the public health emergency.
- Increasing funding for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Administration by \$1.05 billion in anticipation of increased UI claims.
- Prohibiting gender pricing discrimination, commonly referred to as the ‘Pink Tax.’
- Ensuring all New York employees have between five to seven days (40 to 56 hours, respectively) of sick leave.
- Eliminating the current photo identification requirement for public assistance recipients and allowing these New Yorkers to access a free identification card from the state Department of Motor Vehicles.
- Allowing the State Department of Taxation and Finance to provide the Earned Income Tax Credit to eligible New Yorkers who qualify, but hadn’t applied.
- Expands prevailing wage requirements to private projects over \$5 million paid in whole or partially with public funds as well as projects where public funds make up at least 30 percent of the aggregated total costs, with certain exemptions.

Investing in New York Students

The Senate Majority understands that education is the great equalizer in our society and that every student, regardless of their zip code, deserves access to a world-class education. The Senate Majority fought to restore proposed cuts and maintain funding for New York State schools and education programs, despite the economic downturn and lower anticipated revenue. The 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Providing a \$104 million increase in School Aid for a total of \$27.9 billion
- Ensuring every school district is held harmless in Foundation Aid and will receive the same amount as in 2019-20 – a total state-wide investment of \$18.4 billion.
- Providing a \$96 million increase for expense-based aids for a total funding level of \$8.99 billion

- Providing \$10 million in new funding for student mental health support grants and \$1 million for civics curriculum development. Additionally, past years' competitive grants are maintained, totaling more than \$230 million in funding to school districts for programs such as early college high schools, after-school programming, and advanced courses.
- Authorizing a regional high school in Syracuse, known as the Syracuse Comprehensive Education and Workforce Training Center, to offer a high school curriculum that focuses on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM).
- Establishing a monitor system for the Rochester City School District and directing the State Education Commissioner to designate a monitor whose appointment will last through June 30, 2023. Additionally, spin up aid will be provided to the Rochester City School District to address the district's \$35 million shortfall.

Boosting Economic Development across New York State:

The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic is harming New York businesses and workers. The Senate Majority has already stepped up to help struggling employees and small businesses [impacted by coronavirus quarantines](#), and will continue to support New York job creators. To help grow the economy and rebound from the COVID-19 situation, the 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Extending the application period for START-UP NY for five years to December 2025.
- The enacted budget provides an additional \$4,714,000 for statewide and local economic development programs.
- Extending the Excelsior Tax Credit Program for 5 years.
- Making the New York Buy American Act permanent.
- Expanding the eligibility of the Economic Transformation Facility Redevelopment Program through 2021 to support the economies of communities affected by the closure of certain correctional facilities in 2011.
- Providing an additional \$365,000 Minority and Women-Owned Business Development.

Protecting New York Communities and Reforming the Criminal Justice System

Building on the Senate Majority's [historic legislation](#) to protect New York [children](#) and [communities](#) from the scourge of gun violence, the 2020-2021 State Budget includes provisions to help keep more guns off New York streets. Additionally, as part of the Senate Majority's ongoing efforts to fix the state's broken criminal justice system and keep New York communities safe, key provisions were advanced in the Budget to ensure New York continues to serve as a progressive leader to the nation. The 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Improvements to New York's bail law such as making several high level offenses now bail eligible including certain sex crimes, high level drug offenses, domestic violence felonies, crimes resulting in a death, and offenses directly related to an individual's flight risk. The reform proposal also:
 - Creates a mechanism to address individuals who repeatedly commit crimes;
 - Expands reporting requirements so that the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Office of Court Administration can better track outcomes of the state's new bail law; and
 - Maintains the existing bail structure where most misdemeanors and non-violent felonies are not bail eligible.
- Providing \$40 million to support the implementation of discovery reforms.
- The enacted budget establishes two degrees of Domestic Act of Terrorism Motivated by Hate and establishes a Domestic Terrorism Task Force.
- Barring gun ownership for individuals who commit serious offenses in other states.

- Empowering law enforcement to seize weapons for at least 48 hours when responding to domestic violence incidents. Law enforcement will be authorized to seize firearms that are in plain view when conducting a lawful search in responding to a domestic violence incident.
- Keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers by ensuring District Attorneys follow current practices and Court Clerks promptly provide information on misdemeanor domestic violence convictions to the State Department of Criminal Justice Services to ensure these offenses are easier to identify on a criminal record for gun background checks.

Helping New York Farmers and the Agriculture Industry

The state's agriculture industry is an essential economic driver, job creator, and source of vital food for millions of people here and throughout the world. To help New York farmers endure the coronavirus pandemic and invest in the future, 2020-21 State Budget includes:

- Investing \$51.8 million in statewide agricultural programs to support New York farmers.
- Doubling the Child Nutrition Programs discretionary spending limit for school districts' from \$50,000 to \$100,000 so more healthy, New York-grown products can be purchased by schools.
- Expanding the definition of "immediate family member" in Farm Labor Statutes to clarify that immediate family means third degree of consanguinity and affinity.
- Increasing the housing development fund for grant limits for the Farmworker Housing Program.
 - Increasing loan caps for the Farmworker Housing Project from \$100,000 up to \$200,000.

Supporting Local Government and New York Taxpayers

Local governments have stepped up to work with the State government to address the coronavirus pandemic. The Senate Majority understands that reducing burdens on local governments will help avoid increased taxes on struggling New Yorkers. To support local governments, the 2020-21 State Budget includes:

- Investing millions of state dollars for municipalities to continue providing essential services to New Yorkers.
- Allowing for up to 40 years' maturity for loans helping low-income communities finance water infrastructure improvements.
- Ensuring pay equity at state and local public authorities.
- Moving the NYC Housing Vacancy Study to accommodate the Federal Census.

Protecting New York's Environment and Natural Resources

The Senate Majority has been at the forefront of protecting New York State's environment and natural resources. The 2020-2021 State Budget builds on the [historic environmental protection](#) efforts undertaken by the Senate Majority last year, and includes:

- Authorizing the \$3 billion 'Restore Mother Nature Bond Act' which includes:
 - \$1 billion for restoration and flood risk reduction;
 - \$700 million for climate change mitigation;
 - \$550 million for open space land conservation and recreation;
 - \$550 million for water quality improvement and resilient infrastructure; and
 - Specific provisions for projects benefiting environmental justice communities
- Banning polystyrene food packaging and polystyrene packaging peanuts beginning January 1, 2022.

- Banning high-volume hydraulic fracturing plus imposing a moratorium on applications for gelled propane hydraulic fracturing filed with the Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Creating a new Office of Renewable Energy Siting, a NYSERDA build-ready program, and an electric power transmission plan to accelerate the development of renewable energy, while ensuring community input and benefits and environmental protections.

Supporting our Veterans

The Senate Majority understands the importance of protecting and providing services to over 800,000 veterans in New York State. The 2020-21 State Budget includes:

- Providing funds for programs that help connect veterans with peers, address PTSD, and transition back to civilian life.
- Extending the ‘Hire-a-Vet’ tax credit to help incentivize New York businesses to provide good paying jobs for returning veterans.

Investing in New York Transportation Options

The Senate Majority understands that investing in New York’s mass transit and public transportation infrastructure is an investment in our state’s future economic success. Maintaining public transportation and state roadways is essential for New Yorkers’ quality of life and the state economy. The 2020-21 State Budget includes:

- Committing \$3 billion to the MTA's 2020-24 Capital Plan.
- Providing the State Department of Transportation with \$6 billion in capital funds to help ensure vital investments are made to the state’s transportation system.
- Allocating funds for extreme winter recovery road reconstruction to keep these roads functional so New Yorkers can continue traveling safely.
- Increasing Statewide Mass Transportation Operating Assistance to support public transit systems across the state.

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