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PRESS RELEASE
Skoufis Touts Wins for Orange County in Senate's Budget Plan

Senator James Skoufis (D-Orange County) applauded numerous provisions spelled out in the State Senate's budget proposal, approved Thursday, which would directly support Orange County communities. From historic levels of educational funding, including the full phase-in of truly universal pre-kindergarten, to aid boosts for local infrastructure and expanded incentives for first responders, to opposing the Governor's ill-conceived housing mandates, a number of Skoufis' major priorities were advanced in this plan. The proposal establishes the chamber's priorities as they embark on final negotiations for an enacted state budget in coming weeks with the Assembly and the Governor.

"The release of our one-house budget is where the rubber starts to meet the road each year," said **Skoufis**. "It's how legislators communicate their priorities, and for me, my priorities are firmly rooted in making life in Orange County safer, more affordable, and easier for hard-working families. Our communities deserve their fair slice of the pie, and I'll continue to fight for the resources our district needs as a final budget is negotiated."

Key highlights from the Senate's one-house budget proposal include:

- **Fully funding our schools** with a boost of roughly 19% (or $2,500 per student) across Orange County's school districts, and an additional $125 million for early adopters of full-day pre-kindergarten programming, marking New York's swift adoption of truly universal UPK statewide.
- **Increased aid to our libraries,** including an added $7 million in operating funds, and $25 million in capital funding to support construction projects.
- **Standing up for local control of housing,** by eliminating the Governor's proposal to overrule local zoning and pulling Orange County into the group of counties with a lower 1% housing growth target.
- **Creation of a state monitor** to reign in wasteful corporate tax breaks offered by the Orange County IDA that have long deprived our communities and school districts of needed revenue and are a primary reason why property taxes are sky-high.

- **Expanding the Empire State Child Tax Credit** for kids under four years old, and allowing for retroactive enrollment in the Child Health Program to the first of the month.
- **Expanding the volunteer firefighter property tax credit from $200 to $800**, and creating a stipend for firefighter training expenses.
- **Advancing a 8.5% cost-of-living increase** for those in the human services sector, including mental health workers, and increasing the minimum wage for homecare workers by $2 over the next two years.
- **Expanding eligibility for TAP recipients** so middle-class families have greater access to financial aid, and saying no to the Governor's proposed SUNY/CUNY tuition hikes.
- A $2 billion increase in total state road and bridge program funding, including **$200 million in Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS)** support for local municipalities.
- **Restoring loan forgiveness for New York's young farmers**, and allowing farmers to claim a refund of excess Investment Tax Credits.
- **Raising the income tax rate on millionaires** who make over $5 million annually.

The Senate's proposal also included several pieces of Senator Skoufis' legislation, including expanding the Healthy Terminals Act to include Stewart International Airport to ensure prevailing wage rates for airport workers; authorizing the use of body imaging scanning equipment in correctional facilities throughout the state; and reversing former Governor Cuomo's abrupt changes to the state flag.

With successful inclusion of Skoufis' priorities in the Senate's one-house budget, negotiations will now begin with the Assembly and Governor towards a final, balanced state budget, due April 1.

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