



Assemblymember Vivian E. COOK



Winter 2018

Dear Neighbors:

I am pleased to provide this end of the year news report to the residents of the 32nd Assembly District. This report will recap the passage of the 2018-19 New York State Budget. This \$168.3 billion budget includes a nearly \$1 billion increase in education funding, invests in infrastructure and transportation repairs, protects New Yorkers from federal tax changes, and institutes meaningful sexual harassment policy reforms. This budget gives all New Yorkers a voice – from the public school student who deserves every chance to reach for the stars, to the tenant whose quality of life has been sacrificed for far too long, to the hardworking parents struggling to put their children through college, and to the family torn apart by the opioid crisis. In the upcoming Legislative Session I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue to support this blueprint to build a better New York.

I would also like to thank you for your letters and phone calls, and for taking the time to stop by my office. Please know that your concerns are very important to me, and I will continue to always strive to be the voice of the people who elected me as your representative of the 32nd Assembly District of Queens County.

Please feel free to contact me at (718) 322-3975 if I may be of assistance. Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable holiday.

Sincerely,

Vivian E. Cook
Member of Assembly

NYS Budget Highlights

Investing in Public Education

The 2018-2019 state budget builds on the Assembly’s commitment to ensuring every New York student receives a quality education by providing a total of \$26.6 billion in education funding. That’s an increase of \$914 million – or 3.6 percent – over the previous year and a 36 percent increase since 2012. This includes a \$618 million increase in Foundation Aid for a total of \$17.8 billion.

“The best education plants the seeds for a future that’s budding in the imaginations of our kids,” said Assemblymember Cook. “Our students deserve to learn not only how to read and write, but also how to think critically and creatively. The state budget ensures every student, no matter where they live or what barriers stand in their path, has those opportunities.”

To support students in underserved communities, it includes a \$50 million increase to help high-need schools – including struggling schools, districts with large numbers of English language learners (ELLs) and districts with increasing numbers of homeless students – become community schools. In addition, the budget increases the minimum community schools funding amount from \$10,000 to \$75,000. The budget goes further to support ELLs by including \$2.8 million in increased support for students who face language barriers, as well as \$2 million for bilingual education grants for a total of \$17.5 million and \$770,000 for training programs to increase the number of teachers providing bilingual and multilingual education. It also invests \$10 million in a second round of Empire State After School awards, providing after-school care for over 6,000 students. The funding will be directed to districts with high rates of childhood homelessness so that more children have a safe place to learn and grow outside of the classroom, noted Assemblymember Cook.

“The affordability crisis in higher education grows starker every year, preventing far too many New Yorkers from achieving their college dreams,” said Assemblymember Cook. “The budget provides substantial funding for state schools and the Excelsior Scholarship program because a student’s ability to pay should never determine where their educational journey ends.”

Expanding Opportunity Programs

The spending plan also restores \$23.8 million to college opportunity programs, including:

- \$35.5 million for the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), which is \$5.9 million more than the executive budget proposal;
- \$32.2 million for the Education Opportunity Program (EOP), which is \$5.36 million more than the executive proposal;
- \$28.1 million for Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK), which is \$4.68 million more than the executive proposal;
- \$18.4 million for Liberty Partnerships, which is \$3.06 million more than the executive proposal;



Assemblymember Cook is pleased to greet Corey Johnson, the newly elected President of the New York City Council on his visit to Albany to address legislative issues that impact NYC residents.



Assemblymember Cook attends the Assembly Ways and Means Committee Meeting where she is a ranking member. The Ways and Means Committee members vote on all the bills necessary for the passage of the New York State Budget and all bills which have fiscal impact.



Assemblymember Cook joins her colleagues as they celebrate Haitian Unity Day 2018.

- \$15.8 million for the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), which is \$2.6 million more than the executive proposal;
- \$11.9 million for the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-STEP), which is \$1.99 million more than the executive proposal; and
- \$1.3 million for College Discovery, which is \$225,000 more than the executive proposal.

“Opportunity programs help disadvantaged students bridge the gap and excel at the college level,” said Assemblymember Cook. “This year’s budget invests in these critical programs so that more young New Yorkers have the resources they need to thrive at the college level and land good-paying jobs after graduation.”

Supporting Public and Community Colleges

The 2018-19 state budget also invests heavily in SUNY and CUNY schools, as well as community colleges across the state. The plan:

- allocates \$12.1 million to SUNY, and \$6.3 million to CUNY, to increase community college base aid by \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, bringing the total rate to \$2,847;
- restores \$1.1 million to SUNY, and \$902,000 for CUNY, to Child Care Centers;
- restores \$2.5 million to the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP);
- restores \$5 million for Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs), for a total of \$60.04 million;
- restores \$2 million to Advanced Technology Training Information Networking (ATTAIN) labs for a total of \$6.5 million; and restores \$92 million in state operating support for SUNY hospitals.

“Since their inception, SUNY and CUNY schools have provided an affordable, high-quality education for generations of New Yorkers,” said Assemblymember Cook. “That’s why the budget provides these academic institutions with the tools they need to continue shaping New York’s future leaders.”

Protecting Public Libraries

The budget continues New York’s commitment to local libraries, providing a total of \$96.6 million, an increase of \$1 million over last year. Libraries not only lend books, they also offer resources ranging from adult literacy classes to job search resources and provide a community hub for everyone from the youngest children to retirees, noted Assemblymember Cook. In addition, the budget provides \$34 million to support library capital projects across the state.

Making Higher Education More Affordable

A college degree is increasingly vital to landing a good-paying job and securing a middle-class living. Unfortunately, rising costs have left far too many New York families unable to pay for higher education. To address this affordability crisis and help level the playing field, the 2018-19 state budget invests \$7.6 billion in higher education, an increase of \$1.2 billion – or 25 percent – since 2012.

The 2018-19 budget plan allocates \$118 million to support the approximately 27,000 students in the Excelsior Scholarship program, which makes SUNY and CUNY schools tuition-free for New Yorkers who earn less than \$110,000 this year. When fully phased in, the program will enable more than half of all full-time students at public colleges and universities to attend school tuition-free.

Protecting NYCHA Tenants

“Many NYCHA tenants have experienced utility outages and disruption to their daily lives – there’s something extremely wrong and deeply disturbing about that,” Assemblymember Cook said. “That’s why this budget invests in NYCHA. Safe, affordable housing is a right – it should never be a far-off dream.”

The budget provides \$250 million for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to make capital repairs, including replacing and updating heating equipment, as well as weatherization and other critical maintenance projects. This money is only a start to addressing the issues, noted Assemblymember Cook.

It also allows NYCHA to use the design-build procurement process, which would expedite boiler replacements and other construction and repair projects by consolidating both the design and construction of a project into a single contract.

Eighty percent of NYCHA residents were without heat at some point between Oct. 1 and Jan. 22. This is detrimental to each resident’s living conditions, health and safety and interferes with families’ work and school obligations, Assemblymember Cook said.

Fighting Back Against Homelessness

While every New Yorker should have a roof over their head when they go to sleep at night, the unfortunate reality is that many people across the state don’t have a place they can call home and therefore must brave the unpredictable New York weather on a regular basis looking for somewhere to sleep. Homelessness is a crisis in New York State, which is why the budget continues the state’s affordable and homeless housing and services initiative. The funding will continue to support the creation or maintenance of the program’s 100,000 units of affordable housing and 6,000 units of supportive housing.

“Everyone needs a place to call home, and that home should not be temporary or unsafe,” Assemblymember Cook said. “Regardless of an individual’s situation, they should have a roof over their head, a comfortable bed and a nice meal.”

The state budget includes the establishment of a program in New York City and the city of Rochester for families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Under the program, individuals and families would be offered a rental supplement up to 100 percent of the fair market rent for up to four years.

Also included in the state budget is funding to increase mental health and substance use disorder services for homeless individuals. The Office of Mental Health and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance will work alongside Assertive Community Treatment teams to provide services and assistance for individuals with mental illness living in homeless shelters. Additionally, on-site substance use disorder treatment services will be made available in 14 existing shelters across the state by the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Under this year’s state budget, it is required that all local social services districts develop and implement an approved outreach and services plan to address street homelessness.

Providing a Safety Net for Those in Need

The state budget provides \$18.9 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs that provide educational opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities, assist low-income residents with employment and help strengthen families, including:

- \$8.5 million for Facilitated Enrollment to expand eligibility for child care assistance, allowing parents to stay employed while their children are cared for;
- \$4 million for Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) labs, which provide technology and access to education and workforce development training;

Budget Highlights *(continued)*

- \$2.85 million for Career Pathways, which helps train low-income young adults for jobs in high-growth sectors;
- \$1.57 million for Preventative Services to keep families together and children safe;
- \$800,000 for ACCESS, which links educational opportunities to internships and job placements;
- \$475,000 for the wage subsidy program, which helps develop job opportunities for recipients of public assistance and low-income individuals;
- \$334,000 for SUNY/CUNY Child Care to address compliance issues, including background checks, training programs and inspections;
- \$200,000 for the Fatherhood Initiative, which helps fathers reconnect with their children and develop essential parenting skills; and
- \$144,000 for Wheels for Work, which helps low-income individuals secure reliable transportation to and from work.

“These programs provide critical services that give individuals access to resources to put them on the path of self-sufficiency, whether that’s strengthening job-related skills or strengthening family relationships,” Assemblymember Cook said.

To help further protect individuals with disabilities, the state budget allocates \$1.5 million for the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP), which provides legal representation when federal disability benefits have been denied or discontinued.

The state budget also provides \$1.62 million for the Displaced Homemakers Program to help people who have been displaced from their careers as unpaid homemakers and provide services to get them back into the career field.

Supporting At-Risk Youth

To ensure that the children of New York State have every opportunity to succeed in life, regardless of their family’s financial situation, the state budget funds programs dedicated to helping young people achieve success, including:

- \$22.3 million for the Advantage After School Program, providing structured activities for kids to help them succeed academically, which is \$5 million more than the executive budget;
- \$15.6 million for the Youth Development Program – \$1.5 million more than the executive budget – which builds relationships between children and their communities;
- \$2.45 million for settlement houses, which provide educational, recreational and other social services to the community;
- \$2.2 million for Kinship Care, which is \$1.9 million more than the executive budget; and
- \$320,000 for Kinship Navigator – \$100,000 more than the executive budget – which provides a support system for relative and non-relative kinship caregivers.

The state budget also provides \$3 million in funding for Safe Harbour to help support victims of childhood sexual abuse overcome the unspeakable trauma they have suffered and \$758,000 to reduce caseloads for child protective workers.



Assemblymember Cook is pleased to meet with the students of the York College Nursing Program.



Members of York College Social Work Club meet with Assemblymember Cook at their Annual Legislative Advocacy Day at the State Capitol.

Strengthening Child Care for New York State families

The budget invests close to \$80 million to ensure safe, affordable child care, including:

- \$31 million for pre-licensure and annual licensing inspections for child care providers;
- \$17 million for conducting background checks on child care providers and staff members;
- \$15 million for infant and toddler care quality efforts;
- \$12 million for ongoing training on health and safety programs; and
- \$2 million for staffing system changes.

The state budget also provides a minimum of \$10 million for new subsidized child care slots.

Combating the Opioid Crisis, Substance Use Disorders

To combat the opioid epidemic and create a road to recovery, the state budget makes investments in prevention, treatment and recovery services, including establishing a stewardship fund. The fund will be supported by a fee paid by manufacturers and distributors registered to sell and/or distribute opioids in the state.

The \$100 million Opioid Stewardship Fund seeks to help curb the epidemic by creating a partnership with the pharmaceutical industry to expand prevention, treatment and recovery programs for individuals with substance use disorder.

The state budget also allocates nearly \$250 million in funding to address the heroin and opioid crisis, including an increase of \$26 million to support the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) in improving educational and awareness campaigns, prevention, treatment and recovery programs and residential service opportunities. The funding supports a variety of treatment and prevention programs, including family support navigators, peer supports, recovery clubhouses and community coalitions.

Protecting Affordable Health Care

The budget addresses rising drug and health insurance costs so that more New Yorkers have access to the health care they need. It restores \$29.13 million for pharmacy initiatives, including:

- a \$17.4 million restoration to existing prescriber prevails provisions, which ensure patients and their doctors have the final say in choosing medication in managed care and fee-for-service plans; and
- \$11.28 million to reject the executive budget proposal to limit coverage for over-the-counter (OTC) drugs and increase OTC co-payments.
- The budget also protects the hospitals and facilities that provide critical care to New York’s most vulnerable. It provides:
- a total of \$525 million in health transformation capital funding;
- an increase of \$15 million for enhanced safety-net facilities that

NYS Budget Highlights *(continued)*

provide care to large Medicaid populations, for a total of \$25 million; and

- an increase of \$15 million for critical access and sole community hospitals, which provide services in rural communities, for a total of \$25 million.

To ensure the public health programs New Yorkers rely on can continue providing care to the communities they serve, the budget allocates \$9.19 million to protect 30 public health programs from consolidation. The Assembly also fought to restore funding for Community Health Advocates, which helps New Yorkers understand their health insurance and access the health care services they need, HIV/AIDS Community Service Programs, family planning services and the Nurse Family Partnership. The budget also allocates \$5 million to expand programs to support individuals with Hepatitis C.

Additionally, the budget restores \$25.82 million to protect Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) and adult day health care transportation services.

Supporting Seniors' Health and Well-Being

The state budget restores \$8.16 million to support long-term care. It also restores \$7.81 million to preserve spousal refusal, ensuring couples do not lose their life savings in the event a spouse becomes ill and needs nursing home care, and rejects the proposal to limit the amount of resources a community spouse is allowed to retain.

“The decision to move a spouse to a long-term care facility is never an easy one,” said Assemblymember Cook. “When that choice is made, though, no one should be forced to give up their economic security to ensure their loved one gets the care they need. For seniors living on a fixed income, this program is vital because the costs of long-term care can be financially draining.”

Honoring our Veterans

New York State’s proud veterans have diverse skills and invaluable experiences, but they may need to rely on support and services to find gainful employment after their military careers conclude and they seek to begin a new chapter. To support our veterans, the final state budget provides a total of \$1.96 million in community initiatives. These programs provide essential services to help lift up veterans and their families in their transition back to civilian life as well as support current active-duty personnel and their families.

The funding includes:

- \$500,000 for the New York State Defenders Association;
- \$200,000 for Helmets to Hardhats;
- \$200,000 for Warrior Salute;
- \$125,000 for Veterans of Foreign Wars of New York;
- \$100,000 for SAGE Veterans Project;
- \$100,000 for the Veterans Justice Project;
- \$50,000 for Vietnam Veterans of America, NYS Council;
- \$50,000 for the Research and Recognition Project; and
- \$25,000 for the Veterans Miracle Center.

The state budget also extends the Hire a Veteran Tax Credit for two years. Eligible employers can receive a credit of up to \$5,000 for each veteran hired, but that amount rises to \$15,000 for each veteran with a disability that is hired.

“Whether it’s daily needs for their families, help with finding a job, skill development, counseling or finding any other kind of support, we owe it to our veterans to be there for them,” said Assemblymember Cook. “We can’t let down those who have sacrificed so much to defend our freedom.”

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



Assemblymember
Vivian E.
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Reports to the People

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