



Seawright's Statement On The Assembly's Proposed Changes To Governor Hochul's Executive Budget:

"This week we passed the Assembly State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-24 Budget resolution. As Chair of the Assembly People With Disabilities Committee, I set out our committee's priorities to the Speaker in response to the Governor's Executive Budget. The recommendations are taken under strong consideration in forming the "one-house" budget, and we are in the early stages of negotiations now that our house has set its agenda. During the next couple of weeks negotiations will take place down to the wire of an April 1 deadline for the adoption of the state budget.

We are pleased to see the **inclusion of the 8.5% COLA** in both the Assembly and Senate Budget proposals that I have been advocating towards adoption in the budget. Our advocacy resulted in a **\$4 million investment in SUNY and CUNY students with disabilities**.

The proposed Executive Budget cut funding to the 4201 Schools for the Blind and Deaf. The Assembly budget restores the funding of \$2 million and increases the investment by \$10 million for a total of \$118 million.

We are greatly disappointed that the Assembly proposal did not include a Direct Support Wage Enhancement, which would increase the hourly pay of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). New York State has previously provided targeted wage increases only for those DSPs employed by New York State. This creates an enormous disparity between state employed and non-profit DSPs who are making on average \$9/hour less than their state counterparts. The non-profit sector provides services to over 85% of New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

I am committed to fighting to keep these allocations in the Assembly proposal:

- Provides \$30.1 million in state share funding to support staff at not-for-profits associated with the increase in the State's minimum wage.
- Continues \$60 million in funding to support the creation of new services slots, including an expansion of certified housing supports, community habilitation, respite services, housing subsidies, self-direction of services, as well as an expansion of day programs and employment options.
- Includes \$2 million to Establish an Ombudsman Program within Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).
- Provides \$500,000 to conduct a two-year independent study assessing how the Institute for Basic Research (IBR) functions corresponding with OPWDD's strategic goals and the ability to modernize the facility. The Institute focuses on the causes of developmental disabilities and furthers the understanding of brain development and pathology. IBR's goals are to provide the means to diagnose, prevent and treat developmental disabilities more effectively.
- Includes \$250,000 to re-establish the Interagency Coordinating Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Blind or Hard of Hearing

- Provides \$11.7 million over two years in capital funding to support the creation of additional Intensive Treatment Opportunity (ITO) units at the former Finger Lakes Developmental Center Campus.
- Continues \$15 million to support the development of residential opportunities for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).
- Provides \$540,000 in funding to support the restoration of legislative priorities from the prior year.
- Extends the legal authority for OPWDD to implement managed care plans through 2028 by extending the authorization through 2025.
- Expands the Medicaid Buy-in-Program for working people with disabilities by limiting monthly premium payments to 8.5% of an enrollee's income.
- Provides \$15 million to develop housing support for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)
- Provides \$1 million for the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP), granting legal representation to disabled New Yorkers whose federal benefits were denied or discontinued

Other topline Assembly Budget Initiatives:

Tax Relief for Families- Extends the supplemental Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) payment that was enacted in last year's budget for one year for \$182 million in relief.

Higher Education- Rejects the executive's proposal to raise SUNY and CUNY tuition; expands TAP eligibility, increasing the income limit threshold to \$100,000, up from \$80,000, so more students qualify for assistance; and provides substantial additional operating and capital funding for CUNY and SUNY, over the executive's proposal.

Allows each system to use operating and campus excellence funds to hire professors, help with campus deficits, improve enrollment, create a predominantly diverse institution fund, address student hunger, support students with disabilities and provide academic, mental health and other student supports.

School Aid- Includes a \$3 billion increase in school aid, including \$2.6 billion to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time since the formula was created in 2007; provides an additional \$75 million for the Statewide Universal Full Day Prekindergarten grant, for a total of \$200 million in new funding in 2023-24; provides \$280 million in funding to make school meals free for all students in New York State; and Rejects the removal of the regional charter cap in New York City and the authorization to reissue "zombie" charters.

Libraries- Restores and increases funding for libraries to \$104.6 million, an increase of \$5 million; and provides an additional \$40 million in library capital, for a total of \$54 million.

Housing- Provides \$1.5 billion to assist tenants with arrears and homeowner assistance; provides \$125 million for New York City's portion of the new homes initiative program; and rejects the executive's proposal authorizing New York City to allow for the conversion of existing illegal basement dwelling units to legal dwelling units.

Transportation- Provides \$679.3 million for downstate non-MTA transit operating assistance, an increase of \$157 million over the executive's proposal, for a total year-to-year increase of \$197 million; and rejects the Payroll Mobility Tax (PMT) increase.

Environment and Green Energy- Includes a plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution arising from new construction projects; provides that the state energy conservation construction code prohibits infrastructure, building systems or equipment used for the combustion of fossil fuels in new construction statewide no later than Dec. 31, 2025, if the building is less than seven stories and Dec. 31, 2028, if it is seven stories or more; allocates \$600 million for clean water infrastructure; and provides \$435 million for

the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), an additional \$35 million over the executive's proposal.

Preventing violent crime and gun violence- Invests over \$110 million in anti-gun violence programs.

Legal services- Provides \$198 million for grants to counties for expenses related to increased counsel rates for adult representation in criminal court to improve the quality of representation provided to those who are entitled to counsel in criminal matters and are financially unable to obtain representation.

Public health and substance abuse- Provides \$110 million in additional funding for public health programs; provides \$200 million for the Opioid Stewardship Fund's statewide harm reduction initiatives; and appropriates \$123.6 million from the Opioid Settlement Fund, continuing services recommended by its advisory board.

Childcare and Community support- Expands income eligibility to qualify for child care assistance to \$93,200 for a family of four; restores \$2.5 million for Settlement Houses, providing community-based supports including tutoring, employment assistance and early childhood development services.

I will keep you updated as the budget negotiations are underway. Please share your concerns and opinions on the issues that are important to you."

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