



Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz

Reports to the People of the 81st Assembly District

Este noticiario está disponible en español en nuestro sitio Web o en nuestra oficina.

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Serving the communities of Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Norwood, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village, Wakefield, and Woodlawn

STATE BUDGET DEAL HAS GOOD, BAD, AND UGLY

Dear Neighbor:

The state budget process is messy, opaque, and often results in outcomes that are not exactly what I or many of you want to see from our government. A budget is a statement of compromises, reflecting efforts to reach a consensus among the majority of elected representatives throughout the state as well as with the Governor of New York. The nature of compromise is that everybody gets some of what they want but nobody gets everything they asked for.

Our budget this year is no exception, and even though there are a lot of great elements included in the ten budget bills that we passed this year, there are also some items which I think are very bad. For example, the same budget bill which contained funding for a new stadium for the billionaire-owned Buffalo Bills also provided billions of dollars in funding to expand childcare subsidies, to expand the Tuition Assistance Program to help people, including those who are currently incarcerated, attend SUNY and CUNY colleges, for electric school buses, for financial relief for utility and energy bill arrears, and other high-priority issues that many people in our community care about.

Overall, I am very proud of our state budget this year. We invested billions of dollars to address vital needs in the areas of childcare, housing, the environment, healthcare, education, criminal justice, and more. Throughout my tenure as your Assemblyman, this budget may be the best budget we have ever passed in terms of delivering resources for our community. Are there things I would have included or excluded? Absolutely. Do I believe that the bad and ugly parts of our budget should invalidate all of the good things that we accomplished? Not at all.

I remain available, as always, to listen to your thoughts on the budget and the budget process. We have a lot of work left to do, and we have additional steps left to take which were not addressed in this year's budget. Thank you for being a partner in keeping our community strong.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Dinowitz
Member of Assembly



(SOME OF) THE GOOD

- **\$4.2 billion** for the Environmental Bond Act of 2022, which will appear on ballots for voter approval in November
- **\$1.1 billion** for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and Landlord Rental Assistance Program (LRAP)
- **\$6.17 billion** for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- **\$31.2 billion** in school aid funding, including an additional \$1.5 billion in Foundation Aid
- **\$263.4 million** for SUNY and CUNY to eliminate the “TAP gap” and to expand TAP eligibility
- **\$99.6 million** in public library funding
- **\$3 billion** in additional childcare funding to expand eligibility for subsidized care
- **\$1.7 billion** in additional Medicaid funding and safety-net and public hospitals funding
- **\$250 million** for utility arrears

THE BAD

- **\$600 million** to help billionaire football team owners build a new stadium outside of Buffalo

THE UGLY (PROCESS)

- **The Process** — including policy items in the budget is bad governance, whether it is a policy we like or a policy we hate

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

In 2019, New York enacted the strongest climate goals in the nation. In 2021, voters ratified a constitutional amendment to enshrine our right to clean air and clean water in the state constitution. We still have policy work left to do in order to meet those ambitious climate goals, but I am very proud of the significant investments we have made in our state budget this year toward a cleaner environment and climate change mitigation and resiliency.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$4.2 billion** to the Environmental Bond Act of 2022 (will be on November ballot) — covering \$1.5 billion for climate mitigation, \$1.1 billion for restoration and flood risk reduction, \$650 million for open space conservation and recreation, and \$650 million for water quality projects;
- **\$100 million** additional for municipal stormwater grants;
- **\$400 million** for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) — which is 33% more than was allocated last year;
- **\$20 million** toward electric transit buses — part of a five-year, \$100 million program;
- **\$17 million** for electrification of the state vehicle fleet — part of a full-electrification goal by 2035; and
- **\$23 million** to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) — will be used for initiatives such as the Charge NY Program to install charging stations at public, workplace, and multi-unit dwelling parking lots.

HOUSING STABILITY

I have long advocated for ways to keep people in their homes, including the monumental laws that I authored and passed during the COVID-19 pandemic: the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act and the Tenant Safe Harbor Act. We still have policy work left to do to ensure that all New Yorkers are aware of and exercise their rights to keep their homes, but I am very proud of the investments made in this year's budget to support the development of affordable housing and provide housing relief.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$1.1 billion** for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and Landlord Rental Assistance Program (LRAP);
- **\$4.5 billion** for a new five-year affordable housing capital plan;
- **\$1 billion** for Affordable Rental Housing;
- **\$350 million** in capital funding for NYCHA;
- **\$100 million** for additional Mitchell-Lama repairs and homeownership programs;
- **\$15 million** in additional funding for the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) — for a total of \$35 million to help New Yorkers facing foreclosure and other challenges; and
- **\$35 million** for the Legal Representation for Eviction Cases Program to help renters living outside of New York City who cannot afford counsel — which is a 40% increase compared to last year.

CHILDCARE

Access to high-quality, affordable childcare is a significant challenge to helping New Yorkers remain in the workforce after starting their families. Universal childcare must remain our goal, and I am very proud that this year's budget takes massive steps forward to ensure that more families in New York are able to access the childcare services that they need and deserve.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$3 billion** in additional funding for childcare over the next three years — more than doubling the current investment and expanding eligibility for subsidized care from 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 300% FPL by August 1, 2022;
- **\$343 million** for additional childcare stabilization grants;
- **\$50 million** for capital needs of childcare providers across New York State; and
- **\$53 million** for children and youth services to support community non-residential programs — such as Healthy Steps, Childhood Trauma Informed Network, and School and Home-Based Crisis Intervention.

EDUCATION

New York City's schools have long been underfunded by the state, but in recent years we have made significant progress toward fully fulfilling our state's obligation to our city schools under the Foundation Aid formula. We also need to continue working toward tuition-free SUNY and CUNY schools, such as what I enjoyed when I was a college student, and this budget takes important steps toward that goal by expanding the tuition assistance program to more New Yorkers.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$31.2 billion** in total state funding for school aid — an increase of \$2.1 billion compared to last year;
- **\$1.5 billion** for increased Foundation Aid — fully phasing it in by the 2023-24 school year;
- **\$40 million** to increase the teacher workforce;
- **\$99.6 million** in total funding for aid to public libraries — includes \$34 million in capital funding for library projects;
- **\$120 million** in state operating support to CUNY and SUNY — \$60 million to each system;
- **\$48.8 million** for SUNY and **\$59.6 million** for CUNY to fully reimburse each system and eliminate the "TAP gap" — which is the difference between Tuition Assistance Program funding for students and actual tuition costs;
- **\$150 million** to expand TAP eligibility to 75,000 additional part-time students;
- **\$5 million** to restore TAP eligibility for incarcerated individuals; and
- **\$106 million** for SUNY and CUNY to hire additional full-time faculty members — \$53 million each.



HEALTHCARE

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought two incredibly challenging years of physical, emotional, and economic distress and uncertainty to our community. We have long seen the impact of disparities in access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, and we have some real work left ahead of us in our fight for universal healthcare as described in the New York Health Act. Healthcare workers have done an incredible job keeping our community going during the pandemic, and it is important that we do not forget about this hard work as we start to emerge from the shadow of COVID-19.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$3,000** for one-time bonus payments to each and every full-time health and mental hygiene frontline worker who earn less than \$125,000 per year and stay in their position for a year;
- **\$3 per hour** wage increase over a two-year period to the minimum wage for home care workers;
- **\$904 million** in additional funding to the Medicaid program;
- **\$120 million** in additional funding to public health;
- **\$800 million** for safety-net and public hospitals;
- Expands healthcare coverage for undocumented immigrants — one year of postpartum coverage following the end of a pregnancy, and providing Medicaid coverage for undocumented adults aged 65 and older;
- **5.4%** increase to the cost-of-living adjustment for human services providers;
- **\$100 million** to offset the Distressed Hospital Sales Tax Intercept;
- **\$75 million** for residential healthcare facilities and adult care facilities; and
- **\$7.7 million** to fund the Dwyer Program — which provides peer-to-peer support and counseling to veterans who are transitioning into civilian life and navigating PTSD, depression, or traumatic brain injuries.

JUSTICE AND SAFETY

One of the most controversial issues that was addressed is the issue of criminal justice and public safety, specifically the reforms which we made in 2019 to bail and discovery procedures. These reforms were made to ensure that people do not receive different treatment by our criminal justice system based on whether or not they have access to wealth, as well as to ensure that every American's constitutional right to be informed of the nature and cause of any accusation presented against us is upheld in New York's legal system. We made some adjustments to these reforms which maintain the underlying principles of these issues, and we also invested additional resources to ensure that our criminal justice system is able to function equitably and efficiently in order to keep our communities safe.

The changes to our bail and discovery reforms made in this year's budget include:

- Expands the list of bail-eligible crimes to include nonviolent weapons and firearms charges, hate crimes, and subsequent arrests when committed by a defendant who was issued a desk appearance ticket but had not yet been arraigned;
- Adds language which allows a judge to set bail in cases where non-negligible harm has been done to an identifiable person or property, if there were violations of orders of protection, or where there is a history of use or possession of firearms or flight from prosecution;
- Clarifies that if a prosecutor made good faith and diligent attempts to obtain discovery evidence prior to filing an original certificate of compliance, then the speedy trial clock will not be impacted; and
- Requires that a party notify the opposing party as soon as practicable if they are aware of any potential defect or deficiency with either an original or supplemental certificate of compliance so that it can be remedied.

This year's budget also includes:

- Strengthening sale of firearms statutes by lowering the number of firearms required to meet the threshold for certain charges;
- **\$10 million** to combat hate crimes;
- **\$40 million** for district attorneys' offices for additional staff, expanded storage capabilities, and new and updated technology to help prosecutors handle increased discovery requests;
- **\$50 million** in capital grants for parole services and re-entry programs — supporting equipment, technology, and facility renovations;
- **\$17 million** to restore support for criminal justice programs, including re-entry programs, community dispute resolution centers, community-based organizations, civil or criminal legal services, and crime prevention programs;
- **\$10 million** in additional funding for Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs and pretrial services throughout the state — totaling \$39 million for job placement, drug treatment and counseling, and other programs;
- **\$11 million** in combined funding for the NYS Defenders Association, Prisoners' Legal Services, and the Legal Services Assistance Fund.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

There are a lot of incredible programs that were funded as part of this year's budget, and they cannot all be described in one newsletter. Here are a few highlights of other issue areas that I believe may be of interest to you.

This year's budget includes:

- **\$6.17 billion** for Metropolitan Transportation Authority transit assistance — an increase of nearly 20% compared to last year;
- **\$6.1 billion** over five years for capital aid to localities — a 54% increase over the previous five-year capital program;
- **\$32.8 billion** over five years for the Department of Transportation Capital Plan — a 21% increase compared to the previous five-year plan;
- **\$585 million** in savings to motorists from a gas tax holiday between June 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022 — suspends a combined 16 cents per gallon in taxes, with the option for individual counties to cap their sales tax for additional savings;
- **\$250 million** to increase the New York City Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC);
- **\$250 million** for residential gas and utility arrears;
- **\$250 million** to create a refundable tax credit program to help small businesses cover COVID-19-related expenses — with a minimum credit of \$1,000 per business;
- **\$10 million** in additional funding for Arts Recovery Grants — totaling \$50 million;
- **\$22 million** for the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program;
- **\$4.2 million** for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP); and
- **\$4 million** in capital funding for the New York State Regional Food Hub building in the Bronx.

WHAT COMES NEXT?



We got a lot done in this year's budget, and the funding that is being provided will have a tangible benefit on the lives of everyone in our community in some form or another. However, there are a number of critical policy issues which I believe we need to address in the remaining months that we have in this year's legislative session.

I believe our top five legislative priorities for the rest of this year should be:

- 1. New York Health Act:** This legislation would ensure that all New Yorkers are able to access the healthcare that they need at any time, eliminating the complicated intricacies of healthcare networks, deductibles, premiums, and other bureaucratic factors which often serve as barriers for people to get to the doctor.
- 2. Climate and Community Investment Act:** This legislation would impose a carbon tax on just the biggest polluters in our state and would then use that money to invest in communities which have been most harmed by pollution and the impacts of climate change over the past several decades (and centuries).
- 3. Good Cause Eviction and Statewide Right to Counsel:** These two pieces of legislation would protect good tenants across the state against massive rent increases (or refusals to renew a lease) and would ensure that all New Yorkers facing eviction have the ability to access legal representation.
- 4. Utility Consumer Advocate and Other Utility Reforms:** The Utility Consumer Advocate is legislation that I have passed several times but has been vetoed twice in the past. It would create a new, dedicated voice for utility consumers to fight back against rate hikes and to stand up for consumers when they receive massive bill increases or experience utility service outages. There is no question that our current network of utility providers, where corporations are allowed to generate massive profits for their investors and executives on the backs of hard-working New Yorkers, needs to be reformed.
- 5. Decide on the Future of Mayoral Control in Our Schools:** Mayoral control of New York City's public schools was enacted first in 2002, and it is scheduled to expire this year unless additional action is taken. The entity which controls our public schools will likely have significant influence over the future of Gifted and Talented programming in our schools, as well as other key decisions such as how to keep kids safe during a pandemic.

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