

Dear neighbors and community,

We are in the final stretch of this year's legislative session. The Senate completed their session this past Friday in the wee hours of the morning. We will most likely be in the same boat Wednesday morning. As a result of a significantly higher number of members, debates that by rules can be twice as long, and a different culture among leadership, the Assembly tends to move at a much slower pace through legislation. For the last few years this has resulted in several extra days being added to the Assembly agenda compared to the Senate. I have seven bills that are actively moving or are on the floor waiting to be selected for a debate, so advocating with leadership is the central focus of my world for the next 48 hours. Given that it is the first year of a two year session, any bill that makes it through all committees and to the floor but is not picked up for debate before the session ends will stay on third reading as we enter into next year's legislative session. Any bill that does not make it all the way to the floor, will be sent back to its original committee no matter how many committees it has successfully passed through. My bills are competing for air time against thousands of other bills that are actively moving through final committees. Send good vibes for a productive week dear community!

Anna

State Budget



Budget Update:

Once again, here is the link to the final [budget bills](#). Possibly more accessible, here is the [link to the NY Assembly final budget book](#) that gives a summary of all the various parts of the budget that make up the \$254.3 billion total for the fiscal year 2025-2026. As promised, this week I will continue to give a detailed breakdown of the main sections in the budget and highlight areas I believe will be of greatest interest to our communities.



Climate

In her initial budget proposal, the Governor included funding to lower emissions, reduce energy costs, and support green job growth. While these were positive steps, environmental advocates raised significant concerns that the investments proposed did not go far enough to expand cleaner energy systems, strengthen transportation infrastructure, or adequately fund conservation efforts statewide. Building green energy infrastructure, particularly geothermal energy networks, will not only significantly increase our energy reliability and affordability, it will also create greater resiliency to national and international influences on security and cost. Throughout budget negotiations, many advocates focused on the need to release the draft regulations to institute the Cap & Invest program promised several years ago that would accelerate

the transition to clean energy. Advocates also fought for additional support for water protection and further reductions in statewide pollution.

Key investments in the final budget include:

- \$1 billion one-time investment for the [Sustainable Future Program](#) which will fund capital projects that reduce emissions and build sustainable infrastructure, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
 - \$450 million for building decarbonization (such as energy efficient retrofits and heat pumps)
 - \$200 million for thermal energy networks at public facilities
 - \$250 million for clean transportation infrastructure (electric school buses, EV chargers)
 - \$200 million to expand renewable energy generation.
- \$425 million for the [Environmental Protection Fund](#) (EPF), an increase of \$25 million over the Executive proposal, to support a wide range of environmental and conservation programs such as habitat preservation, climate mitigation, farmland protection and water quality assessment and intervention. The primary source of these funds include: Real Estate Transfer Taxes (RETT), typically accounting for nearly 80% of its revenue, as well as funds from unclaimed bottle-and-can deposits and other environmental fees and penalties.
- \$500 million for clean water infrastructure under the [Clean Water Infrastructure Act \(CWIA\)](#). Since the program's launch in 2015, CWIA funding has reached \$6 billion, helping fund over 1,100 projects statewide to ensure clean drinking water, improve wastewater systems, and protect water resources. New York has some of the oldest and most outdated water infrastructure in the country. According to the NYS Comptroller the actual need is around \$80 billion so this fund will most likely continue to be a central priority for years to come.
- \$1.25 billion over 10 years for the [Hazardous Waste Superfund](#) to clean up toxic sites.

However, despite these critical investments, New York continues to rely heavily on utility bill surcharges to fund clean energy programs, a structure that remains burdensome on New Yorkers.

While these were positive steps, concerns were raised that these investments did not go far enough towards our energy resiliency and independence. Throughout budget negotiations, advocates voiced concerns that important initiatives to protect our water, speed up the transition to cleaner energy, and stem the release of pollutants in New York were inadequately funded or wholly missing from the proposal.

Cap-and-Invest:

Introduced in 2023, the [Cap-and-Invest](#) program would cap the amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted statewide and require large-scale polluters as well as distributors of heating and transportation fuels to purchase allowances for their emissions. Revenue from these purchases is intended to relieve utility costs with direct consumer rebates and fund infrastructure and clean energy projects such as upgrading

transmission line infrastructure, converting natural gas power plants to renewable energy infrastructure, build energy storage capacity, reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of our buildings, and add electric charging infrastructure throughout the state.

The deadline to release the final regulations was originally January 2024. They have yet to be released despite heavy advocacy throughout last year and this year's budget processes. Last week I joined advocates and legislators to call on the Governor to release these draft regulations. Two years ago I introduced [A3975](#), which creates the framework for a Cap & Invest program that would include clear guardrails to prevent abuse by polluters and ensures the revenue made from greenhouse gas allowance purchases reduce overall energy cost to working class families. While the program is stuck in limbo, New Yorkers continue facing outdated infrastructure, public health threats, and rising energy costs.

Climate Superfund:

The Governor signed legislation creating the [Climate Change Superfund Act](#) which holds large polluters responsible for funding infrastructure and resiliency projects against climate-related incidents such as flooding and extreme heat. Polluters by definition in the law are those who emitted over 1 billion metric tons of GHGs globally from 2000–2024. Dollars will support vital climate adaptation infrastructure including: coastal wetlands restoration, stormwater drainage upgrades, road and water/sewer system resilience, extreme heat mitigation — with at least 35% earmarked for disadvantaged communities. Shifting the financial burden from taxpayers to polluters is a promising step towards holding large greenhouse gas emitters accountable. The DEC is now slated to release draft rules by June of 2027. Notices to companies must be sent by June 2028, with implementation pushed back from an initial September 2026 start. However, multiple industry groups and 22+ states have filed federal lawsuits so prolonged court disputes are expected before enforcement begins.

Resilience & Adaptation Plan:

The budget supports creating a coordinated, statewide plan to prepare New Yorkers for extreme weather events. [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) (DEC), Department of State (DOS), Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), in partnership with other state agencies, are leading the development of the comprehensive [New York State Adaptation and Resilience Plan](#) (NYSARP). Over the course of the next year, the State will engage with local partners, community leaders, practitioners, and experts in developing this plan.

As part of the first phase of this initiative, the State will host an inaugural series of online webinars this summer. The webinars will showcase immediately available resources to support local and state adaptation with opportunities for participants to share insights and opportunities. Sign up to receive e-mail updates about the NYS Adaptation and Resilience Plan initiative on the DEC website.



K - 12 Education

The budget makes [critical investments in education](#) in New York State:

- \$37.6 billion in funding to the General Support for Public Schools (GSPS), \$1.7 billion increase from the 2024-25 school year (SY). This funding includes all forms of operational and categorical preK through 12 education aid, encompassing everything on the School Aid run: Foundation Aid, expense-based reimbursements (like building, transportation, BOCES, and UPK aid), and various categorical grants.
- \$340 million for universal school meals. This is a \$120 million increase over last year. means that all students in public, charter, and participating private schools across the state will receive free breakfast and lunch, regardless of their families' income. More specifically, starting in the 2025–2026 school year, any school participating in the federal National School Lunch or Breakfast Program is now required to serve reimbursable meals at no cost for all students. The state reimburses school food authorities for these meals at the combined federal and state free-meal reimbursement rate—including meals previously claimed as paid or reduced-price. Approximately 2.7 million students will benefit from free breakfast and lunch each day this coming fall.
- \$28 million for the My Brother's Keeper initiative which provides targeted support services for boys and young men of color to help close the opportunity gaps and improve educational outcomes bringing total funding to nearly \$200 million since

2016. My Brother's Keeper (MBK) is important because it focuses on improving life outcomes for boys and young men of color, who often face deeply rooted systemic inequities in education, employment, health, and justice.

- \$13.5 million to help districts implement a comprehensive statewide ban on smartphone and internet-enabled personal device use in K-12 schools during the entire school day, from the first bell in the morning until the last bell in the afternoon. There is a list of exemptions that were included in the final budget language: students with medical needs, those covered under an Individualized Education Program (IEP), English-language learners, academic purposes, family emergencies or other legitimate reasons. Schools and districts decide how phones are stored, including, for example, in lockers, pouches, or cubbies, and develop protocols in consultation with teachers, parents, and students. Schools must provide a reliable method for parents to contact their children during the school day. The budget allocates \$13.5 million for storage solutions and related implementation costs.
- \$26.4 billion in funding for Foundation Aid (a \$1.4 billion increase over SY 2024-25)
 - Foundation Aid in New York was created to ensure that every student, in every school (over 700) in every district, has access to a sound basic education, as guaranteed by the state constitution. It was designed in response to decades of funding disparities and a landmark court case ([Campaign for Fiscal Equity \(CFE\) v. State of New York decision of 2006](#)) that found the state's education funding system was failing to meet its constitutional obligation, especially for students in low-income and high-need districts.
- The budget includes several important changes to the Foundation Aid formula to more closely align with current day reality in schools across the state and to provide adjustments based on a better understanding of the true cost of services, including:
 - [English Language Learner](#) Factor increases from 0.5 to 0.53 to provide additional funding to students who are learning English as a second language.
 - State Sharing Ratio (SSR) determines the portion of the foundation aid amount a district receives from the state, based on its Combined Wealth Ratio (FACWR). The maximum SSR cap rose from 0.91 to 0.93 primarily to mitigate the sharp drops in aid as a district's wealth increases.
 - Poverty Data Modernization: Shifting from the [2000 Census Poverty Data to a running three-year average of the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates \(SAIPE\)](#) data.
 - SAIPE is annually updated and is an estimate of child poverty at the school-district level, incorporating SNAP/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance data as well as information from multiple federal data sources including the American Community Survey (ACS) to

provide more accurate subnational estimates of poverty for counties and school districts, especially those with populations under 65,000.

- Census 2000 data captured income for a single calendar year and had grown increasingly outdated compared to the realities of 2025.
- The data shift reflects a move towards using more current and accurate estimates, especially for smaller geographic areas, allowing for improved precision and relevance for program administration and funding allocation.
- Economically Disadvantaged Data from Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) data
 - Historically, participation in the National Student Lunch Program was used as a proxy to measure student poverty. Eligibility for the program is based on the federal poverty level (FPL), with students living in households below 130 percent of the FPL getting free lunch and those living between 130 and 185 percent paying a reduced price.
 - But collection of school data on FRPL eligibility is becoming less common, in large part because of the advent of nationwide “community eligibility” rules in 2014–15. These rules allow schools and districts where more than 40 percent of students are eligible for FRPL to provide free lunch to all their students and stop collecting paperwork on FRPL status.
 - Under the new system, students are identified as economically disadvantaged if the student or their family participates in economic assistance programs such as the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Programs, Social Security Insurance (SSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Foster Care, Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), or Family Assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income.
- All districts were guaranteed a 2% minimum increase to ensure stability and prevent funding reductions during the formula transition.



Higher Education

\$23.3 billion in funding is included in the budget for higher education, which includes:

- \$410 million in additional capital for SUNY which will support infrastructure projects like modernizing classrooms, labs, residence halls and energy systems.
- \$209 million in opportunity program funding (e.g. [SUNY EOP](#)) that provide academic, financial, and personal support to help marginalized students succeed in college.
- \$47 million for the New York Opportunity Promise Scholarship - this is a new program to provide financial support for tuition, books, and fees for students ages 25-55 enrolled in specific high demand fields (e.g. healthcare, manufacturing, IT and clean energy) at SUNY and CUNY community colleges.

Child Care

Governor Hochul's initial budget proposal included increases in funding for some programs supporting child care and child care workers, and reduced funding for or eliminated others. During the budget negotiation process advocates voiced concerns that the Executive Budget proposal did not include funding to expand the child care workforce as it had the year prior which would undo critically needed gains, and allocated no funding toward child care assistance programs such as Facilitated

Enrollment for parents who do not qualify for other support due to family realities like periodic work.

The enacted budget includes a total of \$2.2 billion statewide investment:

- \$400 million to preserve and expand the [Child Care Assistance Program \(CCAP\)](#) subsidies for families, with up to \$350 million earmarked for NYC families. This program reduces out of pocket costs for low and moderate income families. Without this funding, some counties risk closing enrollment mid year or extending already over-prescribed waitlists.
- \$110 million to support the building of new child care facilities and repairs to existing facilities. \$100 million of this funding was designated for renovations and build-outs of childcare centers (especially in childcare deserts) and \$10 million for home-based/family childcare providers.
- Up to \$250 million for an Employer incentive: A tax-credit program (Senate Bill S968) for providers to improve facilities by covering 50% of capital costs, through personal/corporate tax credits.
- \$9 million toward the distribution of maternal health kits and baby essentials like diapers and other supplies to low-income families.
- \$8.5 million for the Birth Allowance for Beginning Years (BABY Benefit) - A one-time \$1,800 payment for low-income parents on public assistance.
- An increase in the maximum Child Tax Credit, from \$330 to \$500 for children aged 4-16, and up to \$1,000 for children under the age of four.
- Expansion of eligibility for the Child Tax Credit, including families earning up to \$170,000.

Despite sustained advocacy, the final budget did not include direct funding for childcare workforce wage supports or retention stipends, which many providers and advocates saw as essential to stabilize the sector.

Legislative Update



The following bills have moved through at least one committee and are priorities I hope to complete this year. Of course, they will remain priorities until I get them over the finish line regardless of what legislative session:

- **[A5832 PFAS Discharge Disclosure Act](#)**. The purpose of this bill is to identify the sources of a class of pollutants known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals, commonly referred to as "PFAS", in the waters of the state through the creation of a monitoring protocol for certain industrial dischargers and for Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs).
- **[A4716 PFAS Filter Mandate for Washing Machines](#)**: Starting in 2028 this bill would require that new washing machines sold in NY include microfiber filters to reduce the amount of harmful microplastics entering the water supply. Why we should care: Nano and microplastics are now being found in our food, in rainwater around the world, throughout all ocean ecosystems, and even in our brains. We have all seen the "garbage patches" in the world's oceans including the North Pacific, North Atlantic, South Pacific, South Atlantic, and Indian Oceans, with the largest Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) covering an estimated surface area of 1.6 million square kilometers, an area twice the size of Texas. As monstrous as these patches are, they comprise less than 1% of all the plastic that enters the ocean. The remaining 99% of plastic that enters the ocean is not visible on the surface and is estimated to enter as or break down into microplastics. An estimated 35% of these microplastics are estimated to come directly from washing synthetic fabrics. [Microplastics can accumulate in the](#)

[bodies of marine organisms, leading to malnutrition, inflammation, reduced fertility, and even mortality.](#) What we can do about it: [Unraveling the impact.](#)

- **[A808 Drug Checking and Harm Reduction](#)**: Legalizes and funds drug-checking technologies to prevent overdoses and save lives. To establish a drug checking services program in statute to assist individuals in determining whether a drug or controlled substance contains contaminants, toxic substances, or hazardous compounds.
- **[A8131 Broadband Access for Tenants Act](#)**: Ensures tenants in multi-unit housing can access high-speed broadband regardless of landlord agreements. To remove an obstacle to municipal broadband service being installed in the homes of renters, thereby increasing access to broadband services where there is otherwise a lack of access.
- **[A1535 Tenant Organizing Act](#)**: language exists in current state law that outlines the rights for tenant's to organize and advocate without fear of retaliation; however, there is no structure or specificity outlined in law. This legislation would simply provide that structure including the relationship with the landlord in the context of the organization's rights and responsibilities. The bill pertains to rental properties with five or more units. It is currently on the floor of the chamber waiting to be added to the debate list.

Federal News



Proposed Cuts to SNAP and Medicaid Threaten Families, Local Economies, and Rural Communities

While the enacted New York State budget makes critical investments in housing, health care, child care, and education, many of these efforts could be undermined by federal proposals now advancing in Congress that would deeply cut two essential programs: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid.

We have been hearing directly from constituents all over the district about the potential impacts these federal cuts would have on our region. Earlier this month [Sarah JP DeFrank](#), *Director of Policy, Programs & Partnerships at the [Food Bank of Southern Tier](#)* spoke directly to the Tompkins County Legislature sharing:

"We have already lost 15 trailer truckloads of USDA food - primarily nutrient-dense perishable items due to recent federal changes, representing 215,000 meals valued at over \$434,000. While we've temporarily replaced those shipments with other products, they do not provide the same nutrition. But far more concerning are the proposed SNAP and Medicaid cuts under consideration in Congress, which would eliminate 9.5 billion meals nationally each year - more than 1.5 times what Feeding America, a national network, distributed last year. Charitable food banks cannot absorb cuts of this magnitude."

The local economic impact of SNAP:

- As of January 2025, SNAP brings approximately [\\$1.5 million every month into Tompkins County and \\$1.05 million into Cortland County](#), directly supporting local grocery stores, farmers, small businesses, and food retailers.
- Each \$1 of SNAP generates \$1.50 to \$1.80 in local economic activity, meaning SNAP supports \$2.25 to \$2.7 million in monthly economic impact in Tompkins County, and approximately \$1.58 to \$1.90 million in Cortland County.
- SNAP cuts would lead to increased demand for county and municipal services, revenue losses, and decreased service capacity for local governments.

According to Becky Lare from the Food Bank of Central New York, "If enacted, these cuts would shift billions in costs onto state and local governments for the first time in the program's history. In New York alone, SNAP cuts could cost the state \$1.8 billion by 2028, equivalent to 682 million meals lost and removing millions in purchasing power from local economies."

Wider economic consequences across New York State:

- SNAP cuts could cost 10,000 jobs statewide and result in \$188.7 million in lost state and local tax revenue.
- Medicaid cuts are projected to be even larger, [risking direct loss of over 78,000 jobs in healthcare and social assistance statewide](#), and up to \$849.7 million in lost tax revenue for state and local governments.

Rural communities face disproportionate harm:

- Rural hospitals are already financially vulnerable. According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), nearly half of rural hospitals nationwide operated at a loss in 2023; Medicaid cuts would likely force additional closures or service reductions.
- USDA research shows [SNAP creates significant employment in rural areas](#), with 27,000 rural SNAP retailers nationally facing the largest losses if cuts move forward.

Workforce realities:

- The vast majority of SNAP and Medicaid [recipients who can work already do](#).
- 86% of SNAP households with working-age adults report earned income.
- Nearly 2 in 3 non-elderly Medicaid enrollees are working. Others are caring for family, attending school, or managing serious medical conditions.
- Proposed federal changes would impose rigid one-size-fits-all work requirements that ignore local realities, increase bureaucratic red tape, and push vulnerable families further into crisis.

I remain fully committed to advocating at both the state and federal level to protect the integrity of SNAP, Medicaid, and other essential safety net programs that directly support our community's well-being, economic stability, and long-term health.

Around the District



NYSEG/RG&E Audit Findings, Rate Case Update & Next Steps for Customers

Many residents across our region have reached out with frustration over the rising cost of their NYSEG bills and ongoing concerns about billing practices, outages, and service quality. This month, the Public Service Commission (PSC) released the results of an extensive management and operations audit of NYSEG and RG&E that helps explain why these issues persist and what may happen next.

What happened?

- Every five years, [the PSC conducts a full audit](#) of utility management and operations.
- This [latest audit, conducted by NorthStar Consulting](#), reviewed NYSEG's finances, customer service, governance, billing systems, maintenance practices, and long-term planning.
- The [audit identified 128 separate areas](#) requiring corrective action, including many failures by NYSEG's parent company, Avangrid, to properly manage operations, prioritize customer needs, and comply with New York regulations.

Key audit findings:

- NYSEG's corporate structure is highly complex, involving multiple layers of affiliated companies, some of which operate outside of New York. This structure makes it difficult for regulators to track how funds are spent and whether costs are being appropriately allocated to NY customers.
- Many basic customer service functions including billing, meter reading, and outage response have significant deficiencies. For example, NYSEG was found to have excluded over 70,000 customer bills per month from key performance metrics by delaying issuance of those bills.
- The audit raised serious concerns about transparency, governance, and accuracy of financial reporting. In some cases, employees of other states' utilities or unregulated affiliates were incorrectly counted as NYSEG staff when allocating costs to New York ratepayers.
- Utility infrastructure including pipelines and electric grid equipment is not being replaced or maintained at a pace sufficient to prevent future service disruptions.
- Cybersecurity and risk management programs were found to be inadequate and poorly documented, leaving systems vulnerable.

What happens now?

The PSC has ordered NYSEG to:

- Respond within 21 days to potential violations of Public Service Law that may result in financial penalties.
- Submit a full corrective action implementation plan within 30 days to address all 128 audit findings
- In addition, NYSEG is expected to file for another delivery rate increase later this year, which could further raise monthly bills for many households.

In response to widespread concerns, the [Public Utility Law Project](#) (PULP) and [AARP](#) have issued a joint letter that I fully and enthusiastically endorse calling on NYSEG to adopt 10 immediate measures to help struggling customers, prevent unnecessary

shutoffs, and address rising utility debt as many families continue to recover from high winter heating bills. PULP and AARP are also participating in state-level affordability working groups to advocate for stronger consumer protections across all utilities.

Their proposals include:

- Expanding flexible payment plans,
- Reducing late fees and reconnection fees,
- Improving outreach to low-income and senior households,
- Creating debt forgiveness opportunities, and
- Working directly with community organizations to better serve customers behind on payments

What can customers do right now?

While these investigations and proceedings continue, there are still several steps customers can take:

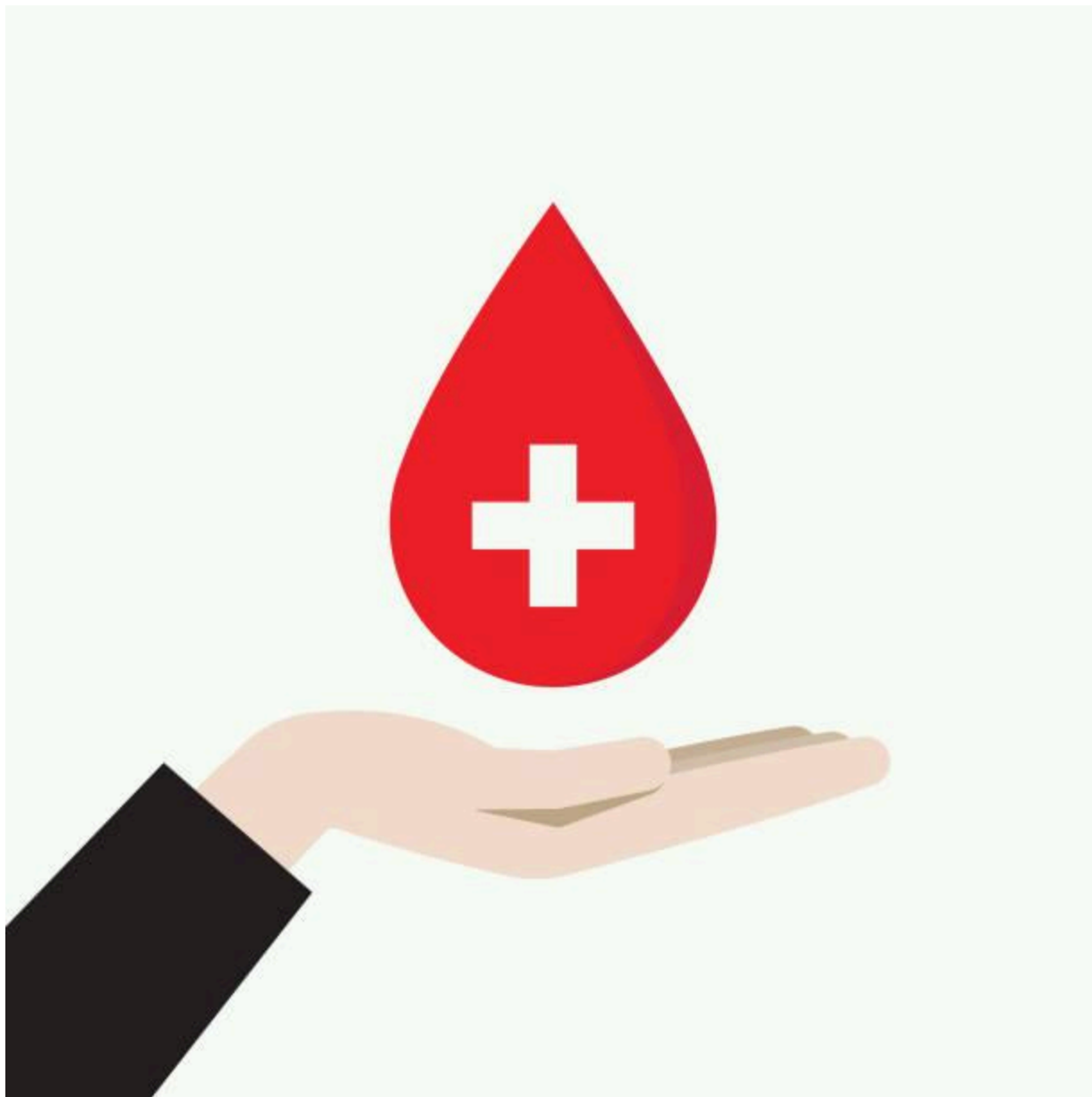
- Stay informed: You can read the [full PSC audit order here](#).
- Report concerns: If you are experiencing problems with billing, shutoffs, or service, contact:
 - NYS Department of Public Service Consumer Complaints: 1-800-342-3377
 - Public Utility Law Project of NY: 1-877-669-2572
- Reach out for assistance: Households struggling with unpaid utility bills may qualify for help through the [Home Energy Assistance Program](#) (HEAP), the [Low Income Household Water Assistance Program](#) (LIHWAP), or utility arrears forgiveness programs.
- Watch for updates: As the new NYSEG rate case proceeds, there will be opportunities for public input and comment on any proposed rate increases. I'll make sure to share when they're posted.

Community Resources



New Application Pathway for NYS Higher Education Financial Aid

In New York, a person can apply for State-administered financial aid to help with the costs of higher education if they are not a citizen but meet certain eligibility criteria under New York's [residency requirements](#). With a focus on sensitivity and security for residents of New York that may have data privacy concerns with submitting their personal information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the [Higher Education Services Corporation \(HESC\)](#) has recently launched a [new application path](#). The new application pathway allows eligible students to seek New York State financial aid, including the [Tuition Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#) without their data being submitted at the federal level.



American Red Cross “Camp Do Good” June Kick-Off in Tompkins County

Every donation collected strengthens our community blood supply and helps save lives. Please consider making an appointment today! The Red Cross is offering \$15 gift cards to everyone that makes an appointment in June.

When: Saturday, June 21st, 10am-2pm

Where: Tompkins Co. Whole Health, 55 Brown Rd. (Ithaca)

How: To schedule an appointment to donate, call 1-800-733-2767 or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) and use Sponsor Code **Ithacacares**.

In good health,

Aime R Keller

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