

New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian Legislative Caucus

# The People's Budget BUDGET EQUITY XXXII

Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages, Chair



# A Demand for Justice



Caucus Budget Co-Chairs

Assemblymember Amanda Septimo • Assemblymember Steven Raga  
Senator Zellnor Myrie • Senator Samra Brouk



## **New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus**

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## 2024 People's Budget - Budget Equity XXXII: A Demand for Justice

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**Message from the Caucus Chair  
Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages  
SFY 2024-2025**

I am honored, as Chair of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus, to present: The People’s Budget - Budget Equity XXXII: A Demand for Justice.

Seventy-six lawmakers comprise this Caucus, which makes it the largest of its kind in the entire nation. Through our efforts, both collectively and as individuals, we remain instrumental in moving policies forward which provide equity for the marginalized people and underserved communities of New York.

The Caucus will continue to leverage its power on behalf of Black, Latino, and Asian New Yorkers so that we can enact bold and innovative policies to guarantee the implementation of a rental voucher program for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of being evicted, the safeguarding of health care for youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and a fair tax system that would increase personal income taxes for millionaires living in the state.

Our members compile our spending and policy goals for the state and present it to our partners in government every year to call attention to the vital needs of Black, Latino, and Asian New Yorkers. We can and must be the catalyst for generational change to tackle the systemic inequities and disparities which beset the hard-working people living in our society. Let this document continue to be a blueprint for the change we strive to make a reality. We thank you for your engagement and hope to see you on the front lines in the continuing struggle of making New York a fair and equitable state for all of its residents.





**Message from the State Budget Subcommittee Co-Chairs  
Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie, Senator Samra Brouk,  
Assemblymember Amanda Septimo, and Assemblymember Steven Raga  
SFY 2024-2025**

It is our pleasure to share with the Governor, our colleagues, and our fellow New Yorkers the 2024-25 People’s Budget: A Demand for Justice. We have the opportunity this year to make meaningful investments in our communities through economic, environmental and social empowerment. The 2024-25 People’s Budget reflects the combined efforts and voices of a broad spectrum of residents, community organizations, lawmakers and not-for-profit groups who together are united in ensuring our budget process leaves no New Yorker behind, regardless of their race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic circumstances, or ZIP code.

The People’s Budget seeks to build a prosperous and inclusive New York where the needs of overlooked communities are in focus. From taking on the housing crisis and expanding medical coverage for the most vulnerable people in our state to reforming our criminal justice system to better help marginalized communities, this budget offers genuine policy ideas that would bolster communities throughout the state. This year provides us with an excellent opportunity to rethink the tired policymaking that has defined our state budget process and, in its place, pursue a more inclusive process that truly involves regular New Yorkers in determining their government’s priorities.

Budgets are a true reflection of our values as a Caucus. More than numbers being processed on a balance sheet, the state budget is a roadmap to a more equitable and impartial New York State. From Buffalo to Brentwood to Brooklyn, this budget proposes major investments and policy changes that will empower communities and position New York as one of the nation’s progressive leaders. We are grateful to everyone who took part in this collaborative process to create this strong, focused and necessary statement of our shared priorities and values.

We join our colleagues in the New York Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus in thanking you for taking the time to review this year’s People’s Budget and encourage you to make your voice heard as your elected representatives begin the monumental process of determining our state’s spending and policy priorities for the next year. The 2024-25 People’s Budget offers the plan for a future that New Yorkers can be proud of. We look forward to advocating for its passage during this legislative session.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**We would like to express special appreciation to all the Caucus members, legislative staff, advocates, and everyday New Yorkers who have contributed to this publication. Without their talents and commitment, this would not have been possible.**

Joshua Joseph, Caucus Executive Director

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**We thank all New Yorkers for their continued advocacy to improve the quality of our state. Their efforts greatly contributed to the content of this document.**





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: BUDGET & REVENUE

**Permanently Extend the Itemized Deduction Limit on High Income Filers:** The Executive proposes to make permanent the personal income tax limitation on charitable contribution deductions for taxpayers with incomes above \$10 million

**Establish the Commercial Security Tax Credit:** The Executive proposes implementing a \$3,000 tax credit for small businesses whose retail theft prevention expenses exceed \$12,000. The aggregate amount of available credit would be capped at \$5 million each year and would be offered for tax years 2024 and 2025.

**Modernize the Tax Law to Include the Vacation Rental Industry:** The Executive proposes subjecting all vacation rentals to state and local sales taxes, including the \$1.50 per unit NYC Convention Center Fee. The proposal also repeals the "bungalow rule," which allows rentals of furnished units to be exempt from sales tax.

**Repeal and Replace the Cannabis Potency Tax:** The Executive proposes to repeal the wholesale Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) potency tax, based on THC per milligram for each product, and replace it with a single wholesale excise tax of 9.0 percent. The state retail excise tax rate would remain at 9.0 percent and the local retail excise tax rate would remain at 4.0 percent.

**Return Tax Foreclosure Surplus to Property Owner:** The Executive proposes that when a foreclosed property is sold by a county due to delinquent property taxes, any excess money received by the county above the liable amount be returned to the property owner.

**Real Property Tax Incentives for Affordable Housing Projects in New York City:** The Executive proposes to establish and extend various real property tax incentives for certain affordable housing projects in New York City, including extending the completion deadline for projects vested in the expired 421-a program for five years, from June 15, 2026 until June 15, 2031.







## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **BUDGET & REVENUE**



Groundbreaking new report from the Fiscal Policy Institute, “Who Is Leaving New York State? Income Trends” reveals for the first time that the richest New Yorkers are far less likely to move out of New York than working and middle-class New Yorkers in normal, non-Covid years. While this pattern temporarily changed during Covid, when all households earning over \$170,000 significantly increased their likelihood of moving out of state, migration trends reverted to normal in 2022. Moreover, this analysis finds that most high earner migration during Covid was due to flight from New York City among those who could work from home rather than tax-related reasons.

FPI’s report includes novel statistical analysis of the two most recent effective tax increases on high-earning New Yorkers (in 2017 and 2021) and reveals that high earners do not significantly change their migration behavior in response to tax increases. The report also finds that when high earners do move out of New York State, they are more likely to move to other relatively high tax states than to move to low tax states.



## **Budget Transparency & Oversight**

The Executive currently lacks transparency in disclosing the allocation of funds and the implementation of budget measures, ranging from capital projects funding to the rainy-day fund. The Caucus emphasizes the need for increased transparency in the budget process and advocates for enhanced oversight by the legislature and the New York State Comptroller's office.

## **NYS Working Families Tax Credit**

The proposed NYS Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), backed by the Caucus, streamlines the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Empire State Child Tax Credit (CTC). It addresses existing gaps by including children aged zero to three, irrespective of citizenship status and eliminating the phase-in for the lowest-income families. The proposed system increases the maximum credit to \$1,500 per child, provides a \$500 credit per child regardless of income and removes the cap on eligible children. The NYS WFTC adopts a quarterly payout system, delivering an average increase of \$1,090 for families with one to three children, while those without children still qualify for the state EITC.

## **Universal Basic Income Pilot Program**

Create and fund a \$3 million Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot program in New York State to reduce poverty rates and improve the well-being of New Yorkers. In 2021, New York's poverty rate was 13.9% - marking the 7th year the state has surpassed the national average. With the state's most vulnerable communities disproportionately living in poverty, implementing a UBI program will create a more secure social safety net for those most in need. The program will also allow low-income New Yorkers to afford basic necessities, alleviate their financial stressors and improve their physical and mental health.

## **Earned Income Tax Credit**

The Caucus supports expanding the New York State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by permanently increasing the state credit percentage to 45% of the federal credit and adjusting filing requirements for immigrant tax-filers. This would incentivize employment and improve overall well-being. Additionally, shifting credits to monthly or quarterly disbursements, similar to the temporary federal child allowance, will further amplify the impact of these initiatives.

## **Work Opportunity Tax Credit**

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal program encouraging employers to hire individuals facing employment barriers. New York underuses WOTC, ranking lowest among 18 states in certified employees per population. Employers can claim WOTC for hiring from 10 specific groups in their first year, certified by a local agency, and working at least 400 hours. The Caucus supports a state WOTC to promote hiring disadvantaged New Yorkers.



## **Reform the Estate Tax, or Tax Inherited Income**

Like capital gains, many wealthy people make their money not from going to work, but from inheriting enormous sums of money from their family. Currently, in New York, individuals can inherit up to \$5 million in a year without facing any taxes—a concerning loophole contributing to economic inequality. Despite having an estate tax, the state's current rates (ranging from 5% to 16%) apply only to estates exceeding \$5.85 million, one of the highest exemptions nationwide. Intergenerational wealth accumulation remains a significant driver of long-term inequality, necessitating a comprehensive overhaul of tax policies.

To address this issue, the Caucus proposes a multifaceted approach. Members advocate for lowering the estate tax threshold and introducing progressive marginal tax rates for estates surpassing \$750,000. Additionally, the Caucus calls for reforms such as altering estate tax rates and brackets, implementing a gift tax, and introducing a tax on inherited income. This comprehensive strategy will generate funds for general governmental purposes as well as actively contribute to the reduction of racial and economic inequality.

## **Personal Income Tax**

Prior to the 2008 financial crisis, New York's Personal Income Tax (PIT) was flat for all income earned above \$40,000. To fill budget gaps created by the ensuing recession, the legislature created two higher tax brackets on income above \$300,000 and \$500,000. For the FY 2024-2025 budget, the Caucus supports an increase in the rates for the “millionaire” brackets (for about \$1 million, \$5 million, and \$25 million in annual income) and the restoration of the \$500,000 tax bracket.

## **Capital Gains on a Mark-to-Market Basis**

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) estimates that New Yorkers with more than \$30 million in assets collectively hold more than \$3 trillion in unrealized capital gains — 46% of their total wealth. Much of this wealth will not be taxed under current law, largely due to the step up in basis rules that eliminate taxable gain when assets are passed on to one's heirs at death. The Caucus calls for a tax on capital gains on a mark-to-market basis. This tax is necessary to address the growing wealth inequality crisis and to raise the necessary funds to fill budget gaps and to fully fund the programs New York State needs.

## **Ammunition Tax**

In their 2022 State of the State address, the Executive introduced a three-part agenda aimed at preventing and reducing gun violence and violent crime. A key focus is ensuring sufficient funds are distributed to individuals and organizations actively involved in addressing gun violence at the grassroots level. In alignment with this goal, the Caucus supports the proposal to establish an excise tax on ammunition, with 100% of the revenue earmarked for supporting gun violence intervention efforts.



## **Long-Term Capital Gains**

Capital gain is profit from the sale of assets such as stocks and bonds, real estate, intellectual property, or artwork. New York taxes capital gains at the same rates as all other income from other sources. The federal tax code, however, provides a significant tax break for long-term capital gains. While the top federal tax rate on individual income is 37 % (and was 39.6 % prior to the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act), the top federal tax rate on long-term capital gains is just 20 %. According to the Tax Policy Center, in 2019 over 75 % of all long-term capital gains went to the top 1 % of earners and only 6 % of all long-term capital gains went to the bottom 80 % of earners. The Caucus calls for raising tax rates on long-term capital gains for high earners; the tax system would better target wealth inequality.

## **New York's Pass-Through Entity Tax (PTET)**

The wealth of the ultra-rich typically manifests in business holdings, whether through privately or publicly owned corporations or through "pass-through" entities like partnerships and LLCs. Taxing business profits becomes a crucial policy tool for both reducing inequality and generating revenue. Currently, this tax is fully rebated, resulting in no additional revenue. However, its primary purpose is not revenue generation but rather to navigate around the federal limitation of the state and local tax deduction, disproportionately benefiting the wealthy. According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), 85 % of the state and local tax deductions benefit in New York State goes to the top 5 % of income earners. The Caucus advocates for a partial rebate similar to Connecticut, which rebates only 87.5 % of its Pass-Through Entity Tax.

## **Digital Ad Tax**

Every day, New Yorkers unwittingly trade their personal information for access to digital platforms, with large digital companies collecting and selling this data to digital advertisers. By imposing taxes on the substantial gross digital advertising revenue of these large companies, New York aims to indirectly tax the widespread exchange of personal data by creating essential new revenue for the state. In a state marked by both extraordinary wealth and significant poverty, it is only equitable to request those who can afford it to contribute more revenue to address our state's priorities, particularly considering their previous exemption from sales taxation. The Caucus calls for a digital ad tax to raise \$1.2 billion annually for our state.

## **Profit-Shifting of Multinational Corporations**

The Caucus advocates for an increase in the amount of Global Intangible Low-Taxed Income (GILTI) includible in the state corporate tax. GILTI is a provision of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that targets the profit-shifting of multinational corporations by taxing unusually high profits in overseas jurisdictions.



## **Medical Cannabis Excise Tax Repeal**

New York's medical cannabis faces one of the nation's highest tax rates, unlike neighboring states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont, where no excise tax is imposed. Massachusetts has a 0% total tax rate and New Jersey has a 2% total rate. Alongside challenges in obtaining a medical card and limited dispensaries, this severely limits patient access, particularly for economically disadvantaged New Yorkers. Despite proven benefits, such as a 51% reduction in opioid use for chronic pain patients, the current program has generated minimal tax revenues, totaling \$12.9 million in FY2022. With New York trailing 27 other states in medical patient enrollment per capita, urgent improvements are essential, which is why the Caucus supports the repeal of the 7% excise tax on medical cannabis products to ensure equitable patient access to these vital health products.

## **Rainy Day Fund**

While it is imperative that the Executive make immediate investments into the state's social infrastructure to promote more positive outcomes for New Yorkers, it remains important for the state to set aside a rainy-day fund in preparation for a potential fiscal downturn. The Caucus supports setting aside reserves when feasible to protect crucial programs and essential services.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: HOUSING

**State Operations Appropriations:** The Executive proposes State Operations appropriations of \$137.6 million, which is a decrease of \$38.8 million or 22 percent from SFY 2023-24. The change is primarily due to the elimination of a one-time allocation of \$40 million in federal support for the Low-Income Weatherization Program.

**Pro-Housing Community Program:** The Executive Budget also includes \$1.2 million to support staffing related to the Pro-Housing Community program, which the Executive proposes making a requirement for localities to receive discretionary State funding for certain revitalization programs.

**Localities Appropriations:** The Executive proposes Aid to Localities appropriations of \$99.5 million, a decrease of \$70.5 million or 41.5 percent from SFY 2023-24. This decrease is due to elimination of funding for various housing programs.

**Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP):** The Executive proposal eliminates state funding of \$40 million for the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP), \$25 million for First Time Homeowners, and \$10 million for Land Banks. The Executive proposes \$8.8 million in new funding for the Blue Buffers Voluntary Buyout Program to encourage voluntary home buyouts in areas prone to flooding. This is associated with additional funding for this purpose contained in the Environmental Bond Act of 2022. The Executive proposal eliminates \$4.3 million in legislative adds.

**Mortgage Insurance Fund (MIF):** The Executive proposal would allocate \$94.9 million in excess reserves from the MIF to provide \$12.8 million for the Neighborhood Preservation Program, a reduction of \$4.8 million, and \$5.4 million for the Rural Preservation Program, a reduction of \$2.2 million from SFY 2023-24.

**Rural Rental Assistance Program:** The Executive proposal also includes \$23.2 million for the Rural Rental Assistance Program, an increase of \$1.5 million. The budget also includes \$53.6 million for homeless housing programs administered by OTDA, an increase of \$2.8 million.

**Capital Appropriation Funding:** The Executive proposes capital appropriations of \$182.2 million, a decrease of \$248 million from SFY 2023-24. This decrease is primarily due to the elimination of various initiatives including \$135 million for New York City Housing Authority, \$50 million for the Homeowner Stabilization Fund, \$50 million for Mitchell-Lama Preservation and Home Ownership, and \$28 million for the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET

### *"A Demand for Justice"*

#### **HOUSING**

“My name is Claudia Waterton and I am the Board President of my tenant association in the South Bronx. In 2017, when a new landlord purchased my building and immediately tried to jack up our rents, my neighbors and I got organized. We found out that our building was rent-stabilized, but our landlord was trying to destabilize the building to push us out. During our five-year long legal battle, we met every month to strategize about how to win. When we found out our landlord was planning to sell the building, we decided that what we wanted was to own the building together. We demanded that if he was going to sell the building, he had to sell it to us, and used our legal case as leverage. In 2022, we were able to finally bring our landlord to the negotiating table and purchase our building with the help of a local nonprofit called UHAB. We are currently working on becoming an HDFC co-op, where my neighbors and I will own and operate our building collectively and purchase our units for \$2,500. We are also working on weatherizing our building, which means our building will run completely on electric power with new heat pumps, which meets the highest standards for NY State’s climate goals. Because we bought the building, I know I will be able to stay in the place I have called home for the last decade. To me, having ownership like this is a way to build community wealth to pass on to future generations. I want all tenants who are organizing in their buildings like I did to have the same opportunity, but we can’t do this without TOPA. TOPA would give tenants in eligible buildings the right to make the first offer when their building goes up for sale. If the building owner rejects this offer, they must give tenants the opportunity to match any offer by a third party. Tenants could buy the building together and own it as a limited-equity cooperative, turn the building into public housing, or work with a community land trust or other nonprofit to remain a permanently affordable rental. In upstate communities with single family homes that are being bought up by huge private equity landlords, tenants would be able to become homeowners. TOPA gives tenants leverage during the sale process, as well as a right to know who their landlord is in the first place. To assert our rights under TOPA, we also need strong tenant protections like Good Cause Eviction, which would allow more tenants to organize in their buildings without fear of retaliation, and vouchers like the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) to allow TOPA buildings to stay deeply affordable to New Yorkers at risk of homelessness.” - *Claudia Waterton, Bronx Resident.*



## **Greenlining**

Greenlining, or designating neighborhoods solely for new and renovated homes, serves as an affordable housing tool and as a neighborhood revitalization tool. As a remedy for the generations of redlining, the Caucus calls on the Executive to focus on Greenlining initiatives that address systemic racial barriers to housing and address the effects of long-term community disinvestment.

## **Fair Housing**

Although New York State established a fair housing enforcement program in 2016, employing paired testing to prevent discrimination, an investigation by Newsday discovered that the state did not conduct further paired testing after the initial round. The Caucus supports the implementation of a fee on real estate agents to fund an ongoing paired testing program and to enforce penalties on agents found to be discriminating against clients. Furthermore, the Caucus is calling for the state to invest a minimum of \$8 million to HCR's Fair Housing Testing Program beginning in the SFY 2024-2025 budget. This will allow the six Qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organizations (QFHOs) to expand their level of service and significantly deepen work within their service areas, particularly in peripheral counties without dedicated staff.

## **Create a State Voucher System (HAVP)**

New York State must urgently fund the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), providing rental vouchers to 50,000 households at risk of homelessness. Like Section 8, HAVP requires recipients to pay 30% of their income toward rent, with the voucher covering the rest, up to 110% of Fair Market Rent. This critical initiative addresses the housing crisis, especially for families unable to access Section 8 due to capacity or immigration status limitations. HAVP not only reduces shelter costs but also prevents families from enduring eviction court processes. With over 150,000 people statewide experiencing homelessness, exacerbated by a 10% increase in New York City's homeless population since January, the Caucus believes HAVP is essential to mitigate this crisis and avoid traumatic eviction experiences for families, regardless of immigration status. The Caucus urges the state to fund the HAVP program at \$250 million.

## **Statewide Right to Counsel**

Every year, at least 80 % of the civil legal needs of low-income New Yorkers go unmet. According to the Brennan Center, fewer than 20 % of low-income families with civil legal needs can obtain the services of counsel to help them gain access to the courts. As we continue to experience a foreclosure crisis and an affordable housing crisis in New York, we must ensure that our most vulnerable populations are receiving proper representation when they cannot afford to obtain such representation on their own. That is why the Caucus supports \$200 million towards expand civil representation for tenants.





## **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act**

The Caucus supports a budget allocation of \$200 million annually over the next five years to give tenants a fair opportunity to purchase the building they live in if it goes up for sale. The Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act will help tenants build intergenerational wealth, prevent communities from being uprooted and preserve affordable housing for New Yorkers. This is an important tool in our fight to ensure our neighbors can remain in their homes and curb speculative real estate practices that have led to gentrification and displacement of New Yorkers of color.

## **Mitchell-Lama Repair Fund**

Establishing a dedicated fund for current Mitchell-Lama properties is crucial, considering the program's significance in providing affordable housing for the middle class in New York. The housing conditions in these affordable rental and co-op properties are deteriorating due to a lack of funds for significant renovation projects. In 2023, the Comptroller highlighted ongoing hazardous conditions at Mitchell-Lama properties.

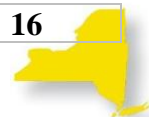
To address this issue, the Caucus proposes a fund to provide essential financial assistance to Mitchell-Lama properties, enabling them to undertake necessary renovations, improve housing quality, and meet local code standards. Administered by HCR, the fund would require pre-approval for any repair projects, ensuring targeted and effective use of resources to enhance the overall condition of Mitchell-Lama properties.

## **Communities First**

New York's housing affordability crisis is putting working families, seniors, and their communities at risk. Vital federal programs to assist homeowners have ended and key financial regulations are being threatened. Communities First leverages New York State's existing network of housing counselors and legal services providers to revitalize neighborhoods and keep New Yorkers from displacement. Since the creation of the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) in 2012, Communities First has prevented over 22,500 foreclosures and served more than 95,000 New Yorkers statewide. The Caucus supports a funding allocation of \$50 million to support the HOPP.

## **Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Program**

The Caucus acknowledges the need for building more affordable and supportive housing in the state. We must ensure that communities of color who experience higher rates of rent burden, homelessness and reside in neighborhoods that have lower vacancy rates are accommodated. That is why the Legislature allocated \$100 million in each of the last two enacted budgets to fund the conversion of distressed hotels and commercial properties to create more housing for those in need. The Caucus supports a \$1 billion allocation to continue supporting the program's work of bringing more housing justice to New Yorkers.



## **Community Controlled Affordable Housing Program**

The Community Controlled Affordable Housing Program initially allocated \$1 million in the FY 2023-2024 Budget, established a pilot program providing small operating grants to enhance housing security and control for residents through Community Land Trusts, shared equity co-ops, and other resident-controlled housing models. The program offers \$20,000 grants or \$50,000 per unit for acquisition or pre-development projects. The Caucus advocates for the expansion of this successful pilot to \$5 million and urges an increase in the maximum award amounts per project in the FY 2024-2025 budget.

## **Public Housing Support**

Public housing developments are home to some of New York’s most vulnerable populations, including seniors and families with young children. Across New York State, our public housing is in disrepair, putting over 600,000 people at risk of lead paint exposure, mold, and other environmental toxins. Public housing developments are regularly without heat and hot water. Residents suffer from non-working elevators, leaks, and infestations. Prior to the administration of Governor George Pataki, New York State provided funding for public housing. It should do so once again to remedy the damage caused by years of disinvestment.

The Caucus supports including \$10 billion in the budget for emergency capital improvements and operating expenses at NYCHA developments, including at least \$3.4 billion in capital funds for SFY 2024 (baselined annually thereafter) and at least \$2.8 billion in operating funds to increase the size of its Capital Projects Division (to allow NYCHA to commit 100 % of currently allocated capital funds as well as additional capital funds included here) and an additional \$2 billion for public housing outside of New York City in the state of New York. We also request the state allocate these funds to public housing authorities directly for emergency repair projects identified in consultation with the legislators whose districts include public housing developments rather than through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York.

## **Senior Housing**

The Caucus calls for \$100 million in new funding for designated senior housing across New York State.

## **Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York State (NPCNYS)**

The Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York State (NPCNYS) plays a crucial role in supporting 140 Neighborhood Preservation Companies (NPCs) by providing technical assistance, training and up-to-date information on housing and community development resources. NPCNYS assists in HCR applications, annual reports, Grants Gateway compliance and proposal development for state agencies such as HCR, OTDA and DEC. To further support the nonprofit business model, the Caucus endorses continued funding for NPCNYS and encourages the expansion of targeted training seminars to enhance their capabilities.



## **Reduction in the Homeless Population**

Homelessness does not represent the failures of individuals and can often find its origins in the absence and inaccessibility of social and economic support. The Caucus will continue to work aggressively to reduce homelessness across New York. Communities throughout the state have seen significant increases in homelessness, and the Caucus intends to help develop resources and initiatives that, in their diversity, provide multi-layered solutions to the problem.

In New York State, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) along with other public housing authorities must work proactively to target their local homeless populations. While there was a strong commitment of funds in previous fiscal years to be put towards homeless housing, more work needs to be done. The Caucus advocates for increased funding for current homeless housing programs.

## **Wi-Fi Access for Homeless Shelters**

As housing scarcity and affordability challenges persist, homelessness rates have risen, exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Remote learning during the pandemic highlighted the difficulties faced by homeless families due to the lack of Wi-Fi access in most of New York City's 450 homeless shelters. The New York City Department of Social Services reports that most shelters do not provide Wi-Fi, impacting around 114,000 children living in shelters. The Caucus supports a state program mandating funding for local social service districts to ensure internet access in all temporary housing, expanding New York's ConnectALL program to include temporary housing sites in their operations and targeting.

## **NY Land Opportunity Program**

The Caucus supports \$2.5 million in the New York State budget for the next statewide cohort of the LISC NY Land Opportunity Program (NYLOP). NYLOP assists Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Mission-Driven Organizations (MDOs) in developing affordable housing across the state. The program, initiated in 2022, has completed one cohort and begun a second, adding 600 units to the NYS affordable housing market. LISC NY aims to expand with a third cohort in 2024, targeting ten participants statewide, covering regions like NYC, Westchester County, the Mid-Hudson Valley, the Capital Region, Rochester, Syracuse, Erie County, and Niagara County.

## **Displacement Alert Project**

Through state support the Displacement Alert Project (DAP) has provided powerful data tools, visualizations, analysis, and data-driven stories that contribute significantly to addressing the worsening housing crisis in our communities. The Displacement Alert Project has become a vital resource for various stakeholders, including community-based organizations, legal services providers, tenant organizers, and government offices. The Caucus supports a continued allocation of \$250,000 in operating support for DAP in the FY 2025 State Budget.



## **New York State Supportive Housing Program**

To safeguard domestic violence survivors in supportive housing, the Caucus advocates for a \$150 million increase in funding for the New York State Supportive Housing Program (NYSSHP). Permanent supportive housing stands as a secure and cost-effective solution for survivors of domestic violence. Unfortunately, NYSSHP, a lifeline for many survivors, has faced chronic underfunding for decades, with rates remaining nearly unchanged since the program's inception in 1987. This insufficient support disproportionately affects survivors, primarily single mothers of color, highlighting the urgent need for increased funding to provide them with the care and security they deserve.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: CLIMATE ACTION, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND ENERGY

**Environmental Protection Fund (EPF):** The Executive proposal includes \$400 million for the EPF, level funding from State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-24. The Executive would allocate \$25 million of the EPF for personal service expenses.

**Clean Water Infrastructure:** The Executive proposes \$250 million for water infrastructure programs, a decrease of \$250 million from SFY 2023-24.

**Energy Affordability:** The Executive proposal includes \$50 million to provide an energy affordability guarantee to low-income residential ratepayers who electrify their homes through the EmPower Plus Program. The energy affordability guarantee would cap the electric bills of participants at six percent of their income for the term of the useful life of the electrification project.

**State Superfund Program:** The Executive proposal continues to fully fund the state's Superfund Program with a \$100 million appropriation, including support for the Environmental Restoration Program.

**Dairy Farm Modernization Grant Program:** The Executive proposes \$24 million to provide grants for on-farm milk storage capacity and milk cooling and transfer systems.

**ReTree NY:** The Executive proposes \$47 million to plant new trees: \$15 million for a new initiative to provide grants to non-for-profit organizations and municipalities to plant 25 million trees by 2033; \$32 million would be provided from the Environmental Bond Act of 2022, primarily for the Saratoga Tree Nursery.

**State Parks:** The Executive proposal includes capital funding of \$450 million in New York Works funding for state parks, an increase of \$250 million from SFY 2023-24. This increase includes \$100 million primarily for the renovation of the Jones Beach East Bathhouse, and \$150 million for the New York Statewide Investment in More Swimming (NY SWIMS) initiative.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **CLIMATE ACTION, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND ENERGY**



#### **Messages from the first Timbuctoo Climate Science and Careers Summer Institute cohort:**

I believe this opportunity I experienced over the summer was very helpful towards my future. I met people who showed me the light towards my path. – *Noel*

Timbuctoo is an experience that has impacted us in such a positive way. These memories are some of my favorites. – *Shiloh*

This experience was so unforgettable for me: Remember to always keep fighting for the right thing, and that you belong where you are, and to never let anything stop you. – *Domenica*

Go outside and remember that you can make a difference if you try hard enough. – *Miriam*



### **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program**

The Caucus calls for an additional \$500 million in funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), particularly requiring the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to allocate the expanded funding to the Cooling Assistance Program to subsidize summer utility bill costs for low-income customers. This initiative will make a significant impact on getting New York State to the commitment of capping energy burden at 6% for all households.

### **New York Home Energy Affordable Transition Act**

The NY HEAT Act is a vital initiative aimed at safeguarding low-income families from gas price volatility and halting unnecessary gas infrastructure expansion. Beyond economic benefits, NY HEAT accelerates New York's transition away from climate-damaging fossil fuels, saving families up to \$75/month on energy bills while capping them at 6% of income. It eliminates the 100-foot rule, saving \$200 million annually and redirects funds from replacing outdated gas pipes to clean electrification projects, potentially saving \$150 billion. The Caucus urges including NY HEAT in the budget.

### **Climate Change Superfund Act**

The Caucus advocates for the creation of a Climate Change Superfund Act, which proposes shifting the financial burden from taxpayers to major greenhouse gas emitters, requiring them to pay \$3 billion annually for 25 years to address climate damage. This fund would support crucial infrastructure improvements, stormwater and sewage system upgrades, grid stability enhancements and public health improvements across New York City and State, holding corporate polluters accountable for their environmental impact.

### **Increasing the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)**

The Caucus urges an increase in funding for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) as we work towards a goal of \$500 million by 2025. In particular, we urge the increase of the environmental justice line in the EPF to ensure that frontline communities are receiving tangible environmental health benefits.

### **Combating PFAS & Other Emerging Contaminants**

The Caucus supports the proposal for a \$25 million program funded through DEC to assist local municipalities and water systems that serve at-risk communities to test and filter emerging contaminants, such as PFAs.



## **Clean Water Infrastructure Act Funding**

The Caucus strongly advocates for the legislature to renew its commitment to the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) with a \$5 billion, 5-year budgetary allocation. As the original 5-year commitment concludes this year, the CWIA has proven successful in funding various municipal water infrastructure programs. Additionally, we specifically request that \$1 billion of this commitment be exclusively allocated to the Lead Service Line Replacement Program. This dedicated funding will greatly assist municipalities in developing lead service line inventories and aligns with our commitment to achieving 100% lead service line replacement. The Caucus firmly supports these initiatives for the betterment of water infrastructure across the state.

## **Addressing Lead Exposure & Poisoning**

As part of the Proactive Registry and Inspection Program, the State allocated \$10 million to the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to support lead abatement for struggling landlords in designated Communities of Concern. The Caucus urges the renewal of this funding, emphasizing that it should be reserved for landlords with demonstrated financial need engaged in comprehensive abatement activities to eliminate lead as a long-term concern, extending beyond the maintenance of painted surfaces.

Additionally, the State allocated \$325 million in SFY2023 to facilitate lead hazard testing and program administration. The Caucus emphasizes the importance of retaining these funds in the FY 2024-25 budget to ensure continued efforts in addressing lead hazards and protecting public health.

Moreover, the Caucus calls for \$50 million for local city and county health departments to support the existing and additional counties within the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention Program responsible for NY's children with elevated blood lead levels.

## **A Just Energy Transition**

The Just Energy Transition Act (JETA) is crucial for fulfilling the mandates of the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, aiming for 70% renewable energy generation by 2030 and a zero-emissions electricity sector by 2040. To achieve these goals while prioritizing disadvantaged communities, JETA directs agencies like NYSERDA and DEC to phase out at least 4 gigawatts of New York's oldest and most polluting fossil fuel facilities by 2030. The transition involves replacing them with renewable energy generation, energy storage systems and upgraded electricity transmission and distribution systems. The Caucus supports JETA to emphasize New York's commitment to a fossil fuel-free future with leadership from impacted workers, communities, and businesses, without job losses or community harm.





## **The Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund**

A just transition means supporting and investing in low and moderate-income households to assist with their electrical upgrades, weatherization, and energy efficiency. Therefore, the Caucus advocates for the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund, crucial for addressing electrification barriers not covered by existing programs. This initiative aligns with our commitment to environmental sustainability and equity. The fund aids disadvantaged households, whether renters or homeowners, by providing "gap" funding for their every transition need. This support encompasses green and healthy homes, whole-house upgrades, electrification readiness and more.

## **NYS Children’s Environmental Health Centers**

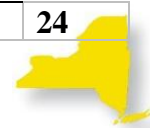
The NYS Children’s Environmental Health Centers, aka “NYSCHECK”, serve to prevent, diagnoses and treat environmentally related conditions for families across New York State. As the first state-based model for pediatric environmental health services in the country, New York now has dedicated pediatric champions across the state working together to protect and promote children’s health and the environment. The Caucus supports an increase in funding to the New York State Children’s Environmental Health Centers (NYSCHECK) by \$1 Million to \$5 Million in funding.

## **Community Directed Climate Solutions Grant Program**

The Caucus strongly supports the establishment of the Community Directed Climate Solutions Grant Program. This program aims to create a grant fund and administrative office to offer direct support to consortia of Community/Constituency-Based Organizations (CBO), unions and local governments, primarily led by disadvantaged communities. The funds will be utilized for community energy planning. The proposed allocation includes (1) \$248 million for grants, ensuring at least three grants of at least \$1 million go to CBOs in each county, and (2) \$10 million for CBOs in and serving Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) identified by and at the discretion of the Climate Justice Working Group.

## **Sustainability Workforce Training Center**

To further advance the state’s sustainability and workforce development, the Caucus supports funding for the Sustainability Workforce Training Center (SWTC) at PUSH Buffalo. This financial support will cover construction costs, programming, and operations. This would leverage existing public investments from entities like ESD and NYSERDA, as well as private investments and partnerships with the University at Buffalo and other workforce providers. The allocated funds will specifically address capital construction costs, staffing, purchase of training modules and equipment, curriculum development, licensing, third-party trainers, participant stipends and transportation options such as transit passes and a passenger van.



## **Clean Energy Programs at Network for a Sustainable Tomorrow**

The Caucus strongly advocates for funding aimed at workforce research and planning under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). New York requires a comprehensive approach to cultivate a robust Green Workforce for the future. The Clean Energy Programs at Network for a Sustainable Tomorrow (NEST) have a proven track record of addressing these issues and convening crucial stakeholders across Upstate New York. Specifically, we support allocating \$1 million for an in-depth study on climate education and clean energy career assets and needs, along with \$4 million for a two-year interagency and stakeholder working group.

## **Increased Staffing for Relevant Climate Action Agencies**

For New York to meet the goals of the CLCPA and efficiently administer key programs that protect our environment and public health, there must be an increase in staffing in key New York State agencies. We urge an investment in our state environmental agencies by increasing staffing levels, putting them on the path to restoration to their 2008 levels, including:

- Authorizing a total of 3,300 Full-time Employees (FTEs) at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Authorizing a total of 2,300 FTEs at Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- Authorizing the addition of 10 FTEs at the Department of Agriculture and Markets
- Authorizing an increase of several hundred FTEs in the Department of Health.

In addition, the Caucus calls for the inclusion of a Tribal Affairs Liaison in the Office of Renewable Energy Siting within the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This is to ensure the state is working collaboratively with the sovereign tribal nations as we seek to increase our actions relating to the climate crisis.

## **Protect Forests to Fight Climate Change**

New York's forests play an essential role in sequestering climate-altering carbon from our air. The fight for climate justice extends beyond communities of color that bear the brunt of climate change impacts. To achieve climate justice, New York must better protect and manage public and private forests to meet the goals set forth in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. The Caucus supports an updated conservation easement program and forest tax law incentives to incentivize carbon sequestration.



## **Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE)**

The survey will provide a comprehensive assessment of Adirondack lakes, guiding our state in reducing asthma-causing pollutants, reducing carbon emissions, and achieving climate justice. This survey will support the critical work of researchers that have protected our air for decades and leverage substantial research infrastructure and expertise. Consortium partners include leading scientists and water resource managers from universities, not-for-profits and state and federal agencies. The Caucus calls for \$4 million to continue funding this important climate action project.

## **Clean Fuel Standard**

New York faces a serious threat from greenhouse gas emissions, primarily originating from its transportation sector, contributing over 34% of the state's annual emissions. The heavy reliance on petroleum-based fuels, especially for trucks, leads to respiratory illnesses, high hospitalization costs and increased mortality rates. Global warming exacerbates these issues, impacting health, the environment and economic stability.

While New York follows California's standards for low-emission vehicles, there's a need for greater efforts to address transportation sector threats comprehensively. Diversifying transportation fuel sources and embracing innovative, low-emission solutions not only mitigates environmental risks but also brings significant economic benefits by safeguarding jobs and industries. The Caucus calls on the state to adopt the clean fuel standards in the state budget.

## **Indoor Air Quality Control Board**

The Caucus advocates for establishing an indoor air quality control board within NYERDA, the Department of Public Health, the Office of Children and Family Services and the Empire State Development Corporation. This board will oversee the implementation and enforcement of policies and regulations addressing "Sick Building Syndrome". By recognizing the direct link between indoor air quality and health risks, including respiratory diseases and airborne viruses, this initiative becomes crucial. Additionally, the proposal aims to create employment opportunities in local communities by training technicians certified in maintaining and installing new air quality control technology.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: HEALTH

**Medicaid Global Cap:** The Executive proposes \$24.8 billion for the Global Cap Medicaid spending, an increase of \$1.6 billion or 6.7 percent over State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-24. The Executive proposal reflects the revised Medicaid Global Cap metric enacted in the SFY 2022-23 budget which indexes spending growth to the five-year rolling average of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) spending annual growth rate.

**1115 Waiver:** The Executive proposal includes \$7.5 billion in funding over the next three years through an amendment to New York's Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration Program to support a series of actions to advance health equity, reduce health disparities, and improve access to primary and behavioral health care across the state.

**Medicaid Enrollment:** The Executive projects Medicaid enrollment to decrease from 7.6 million to 6.8 million enrollees by March 2025, due to eligibility redeterminations following the unwinding of COVID-19 public health emergency declarations.

**Safety Net Hospital Transformation Program:** The Executive proposes to utilize up to \$500 million in existing funding from Statewide IV and V to support transformation plans submitted by safety net hospitals that focus on system sustainability.

**Unallocated Savings Targets:** The Executive proposes to save \$400 million by convening industry stakeholders to identify ways to achieve \$200 million in savings in both long-term care and mainstream Medicaid sectors.

**Health Plan Surplus:** The Executive proposes to save \$204 million by eliminating the 1.0 percent premium increase originally implemented to aid plans with the administration of the Medicaid pharmacy benefit.

**Managed Long Term Care:** The Executive proposes to discontinue wage parity for the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) resulting in \$200 million in savings in SFY 2024-25, growing to \$401 million in SFY 2025-26.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE**



I recently had a baby and got a surprise bill from the hospital for her routine pediatric care right after she was born, even though I was told I was going to an in-network hospital and everything would be covered. These kinds of predatory practices are routine in the health insurance industry and we need to get them out of healthcare. The patients I work with at a public hospital in Queens are living much more financially precarious lives than I, and it's unacceptable that any of us have to fight for the healthcare we need at the most vulnerable times in our lives. A young woman came to see me for a finger she had broken five weeks prior. You didn't need an x-ray to see that it was broken. She was an uninsured immigrant and worried about the cost of a doctor's visit so she delayed coming. This is unacceptable. We need a healthcare system that is free at the point of service with no barriers to care. Healthcare is a human right! Get the insurance industry out! Pass the NY Health Act now! - *Roona Ray, MD Board Member, Physicians for a National Health Program - NY Metro Chapter*



## **New York Health Act**

The Caucus supports the passage of the New York Health Act which would create a single-payer health care system for all New Yorkers regardless of age, income, employment, or documentation status. A Study by the RAND Corporation estimated that the initiative would reduce overall healthcare spending, increase access to services, and reduce administrative complexities.

### **Coverage for All**

Since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, millions of New Yorkers have gained health insurance coverage. Unfortunately, many Americans with immigrant status are not eligible for these benefits, leaving more than many immigrants New Yorkers to remain without coverage. This can create significant costs and challenges for the New York State Health Care System, as care is often only sought out and paid for in emergency settings and individuals are unable to seek care for potentially preventable conditions and diseases. This lack of access directly impacts them and the communities in which they live and work and leads to the need for more costly medical interventions once the issue has risen to the level of an emergency. The SFY 2022-23 budget included language expanding Medicaid to provide coverage to undocumented individuals age 65 or older. The Caucus advocates to extend health benefits to New Yorkers regardless of their immigration status.

### **Primary Care Investment Act**

Primary care serves to promote preventative care and help people to avoid the need for more significant medical interventions. Unfortunately, over time the investments and support in our healthcare system have grown to disproportionately favor more specialized and costly forms of care. New York currently spends more per capita on health care than the national average, but consistently ranks below many other states in key health indicators. The Caucus supports the Primary Care Investment Act, which would establish reporting on the overall healthcare expenditures to determine the amount being spent on primary care services by insurance companies and Medicaid. It would also establish a goal that at a minimum 12.5% of all healthcare spending, or 1/8<sup>th</sup> of total spending, will be on primary care. Insurance plans and Medicaid providers that fail to meet this target would be required to establish a plan for increasing spending by 1% each year until the goal of 12.5% is met.

### **Removing the Medicaid Global Cap**

The 2011 state budget imposed a cap on Medicaid spending growth as proposed by the former Governor's Medicaid Redesign For budgets, changes have been made, such as moving some expenditures out from under the cap and putting other expenditures back under it. The SFY 2022-23 Budget made revisions to the cap to increase transparency, however, the basic policy of a Medicaid Cap remains. The Caucus is calling for the removal of the Medicaid global cap.



## **Elimination of Partially Capitated Long Term Care Plans**

The Caucus supports the initiative to move a significant majority of Medicaid enrollees back to Fee For Service (FFS) model as it was before the transition to managed care a little over a decade ago. Under this proposal fully capitated programs serving primarily dual-eligible (eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare) populations would be preserved. Partially capitated plans do not provide the full range of healthcare services that a Medicaid beneficiary is entitled to with those additional services typically being delivered through either a FFS model or Medicare. This proposal has several potential benefits. It would address situations where providers were not receiving financial support from insurance plans to support legal required wage increases for home care workers. In the past it was revealed that many plans did not pass along the rate increases they received in whole, instead keeping a portion for themselves. By a significant majority home and personal care services represent the largest category of spending under Managed Long Term Care. This proposal would maintain the coordination of services under smaller entities than plans, allowing the state to reinvest potential savings into the Medicaid program to support reimbursement rates that are more reflective of the cost of care being delivered.

## **Medical Debt**

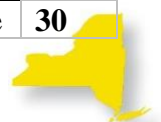
The Department of Health distributes over \$1 billion annually in Indigent Care Pool (ICP) funding to public and voluntary hospitals throughout the state. As a condition of receiving ICP funding, the law requires hospitals to offer free or discounted care to uninsured low- and moderate-income patients. Recent changes by the Legislature have expanded publicly subsidized healthcare options to support households making up to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The current financial assistance law only requires hospitals to work with those with household income levels up to 300% of FPL, meaning that hospitals are typically only providing relief to those individuals in a very narrow income bracket. The Caucus is advocating to require hospitals to use a uniform financial assistance policy as a condition of participation in the ICP and to expand the eligibility and protections available through financial assistance to address many of these adverse impacts .

## **Medicaid Rebasing**

Many services provided under Medicaid have gone years without having the costs associated with those services updated to reflect the cost of care more accurately. While it is possible for the Executive to initiate this process administratively there are separate proposals to affirmatively direct the Department of Health to recalculate costs for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and nursing homes. These proposals will aid providers in being more fiscally stable so that they can attract new healthcare providers and address workforce challenges.

## **Rural Health Network Development Program**

To expand access to cars, the Caucus advocates for the restoration of funding for the Rural Health Network Development Program and the Rural Health Care Access Development Program back to \$16.2 million.



## **Telehealth**

The Caucus supports initiatives to improve access to telehealth services. During the COVID pandemic these services were a critical lifeline and provided an opportunity to see the benefits that can come from having increased access to remote services, including ease of use, more prompt access to services, and the ability to see providers outside the patient's geographic area, which is particularly important in light of workforce shortages of healthcare and behavioral health providers. While the State took significant steps to expand the range of where and how these services can be provided there are still opportunities for improvement. The first is making permanent provisions that require most telehealth services to be reimbursed at parity with a traditional in-person visit. Additionally, allowing certain smaller providers that are serving vulnerable populations to be reimbursed at parity when both the provider and patient are remote would provide significant financial assistance to support these activities.

## **Safety Net Facilities**

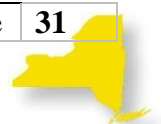
The Caucus advocates for an increase in Medicaid reimbursement to sustain facilities that serve significant populations of lower income or indigent residents. These facilities, often referred to as safety net facilities, typically cater to a largely marginalized population of New Yorkers. Moreover, the Caucus supports prioritizing the distribution of Statewide Health Care Facility Transformation Funds to those safety-net facilities that often struggle to access capital. The Caucus advocates for undoing previous cuts and reestablishing an enhanced capital add-on adjustment to the Medicaid rate for safety net hospitals to ensure the capital rate received is adequate to support their ongoing efforts.

## **Fully Fund the Medicaid Managed Care Quality Incentive Program**

The Caucus urges the state to prioritize fully funding the Quality Incentive Program at \$268 million, requiring an additional state investment of \$156 million. As a national leader in Medicaid care, New York's success is attributed to efforts by managed care plans and community partners. The Quality Incentive Program is indispensable in advancing Medicaid quality by rewarding plans for delivering care to over 6 million New Yorkers. These measures address health disparities and contribute to better health outcomes for underserved populations.

## **Early Intervention Support**

The Early Intervention (EI) Program, catering to 70,000 infants and toddlers with developmental delays, has faced stagnant reimbursement rates for over two decades. Rates in 2023 are even lower than those in 2009, leading to the departure of over 2,500 therapists and the closure of dozens of service agencies since 2019. The Caucus advocates for an 11% reimbursement rate increase for EI, with differentiated rates for in-person services. This initiative aims to address the financial challenges faced by the program, ensuring children with developmental delays have continued access to critical Early Intervention services.





## **Home Care Worker Protections**

New York's essential home care workers, comprising over 210,000 individuals, are vital for the well-being of older adults and those with chronic health conditions. Predominantly women of color, these workers often face mandatory 24-hour shifts, posing risks to their health and safety, as well as that of care recipients. The Caucus supports protecting home care workers from such extended shifts to ensure their well-being and that of care recipients, emphasizing the growing demand for their services amid an aging population. The Caucus also advocates for additional funding to ensure that compensation to workers for this challenging and much needed work is appropriate.

## **Community Health Advocates (CHA)**

The Community Health Advocates is a free helpline and network of 27 agencies to resolve any problems accessing the health care and coverage they need. The Caucus advocates for \$7 million in funding for CHA in FY24 to meet an increase in demand for services because of two policy changes: (1) CHA's helpline number being listed, since April 2022, on all Medicaid notices of adverse determination; and (2) the end of the Public Health Emergency that could potentially result in the avoidable risk of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers losing Medicaid, putting them at health and economic risk and disrupting the healthcare system.

## **Combating Chronic Diseases**

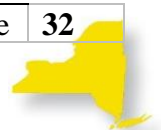
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### **State Medicaid coverage of self-measured blood pressure (SMBP)**

Strong scientific evidence shows that self-measured blood pressure (SMBP) monitoring, also known as home blood pressure monitoring, plus clinical support helps people with hypertension lower their blood pressure. Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death, and stroke is among the leading causes of disability, with high blood pressure, or hypertension, among the most important risk factors leading to CVD. In New York State (NYS), an estimated 4.9 million people, or 31.7% of the adult population, have been diagnosed with Hypertension. The Caucus supports state Medicaid coverage of self-measured blood pressure monitoring.

### **Diabetes**

The Caucus is calling for a statewide \$30 cap on insulin, decreasing the cap on cost sharing from \$100 per month to \$30. This is in line with other states who are also addressing access to affordable insulin, including California and Connecticut. It is essential that New York State address the importance of affordable insulin so individuals can properly medicate themselves and avoid any unnecessary complications incurred due to exorbitant and unsustainable insulin costs.



## **Coverage for Asthma Treatment**

The Caucus advocates for a statewide asthma management and control program to address the growing disparities in asthma prevalence, particularly among marginalized communities. This program aims to coordinate efforts across various stakeholders, including individuals, families, healthcare providers, schools, and community-based organizations. The Department of Health will play a crucial role in studying asthma's prevalence, behavioral and environmental triggers, and case management effectiveness to enhance understanding and care.

## **New York State Cancer Services Program**

The Cancer Services Program provides low-income, uninsured, and underinsured New Yorkers access to breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings, and diagnostic services, including mammograms, Pap tests, HPV tests, colonoscopy, and diagnostic testing if abnormal results are found. The Caucus supports \$26 million in funding to help restore funding.

## ***Addressing Maternal & Infant Health***

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### **Monetary Maternity Support**

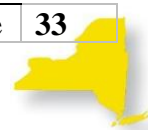
The Caucus is advocating for establishing a state funded program to provide all birthing persons \$1,000 a month for the duration of their pregnancy and one year thereafter postpartum. Financial support to prepare and care for a child in this crucial time, will have immense cascading benefits for both the mother and the child.

### **Nurse Family Partnership**

In New York State, the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) is a proven approach to promoting the health and well-being of vulnerable families. As a result, NFP nurses have continued to deliver the program and meet clients' needs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As gaps in prenatal and postpartum care have emerged during the pandemic, NFP has played a crucial role in filling these gaps in care through regular telehealth visits and ongoing communication with clients. The Caucus supports a continuation of funding for the NFP program.

### **Chisholm Chance Act**

The Caucus endorses a pilot program in New York to address the maternal health crisis, particularly severe maternal morbidity. New York ranks in the bottom third of states for pregnancy-related deaths, with women of color experiencing a death rate three and a half times higher than other women. The highest rates of severe maternal morbidity are concentrated in Kings and the Bronx, with the peak rate found in North and Central Brooklyn. The pilot program aims to address these disparities and improve maternal health outcomes.



## **Infant Medicaid Coverage**

The Caucus advocates for the state to extend Medicaid coverage for infants up to six years after birth, emphasizing the essential child developmental period. The proposal automatically extends eligibility for infants born to Medicaid-eligible mothers, ensuring stable health monitoring and a seamless transition for families. Several states, including Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico, sought federal approval to extend Medicaid and Child Health Plus enrollment for children up to six years. The positive impact of continuous coverage on reducing uninsured rates, preventing financial hardship, and improving health outcomes underscores the necessity of addressing coverage gaps for families.

## **Health at Home Program**

In support of infant and maternal health, the Caucus calls for the inclusion of \$800,000 in the FY 2024-25 budget to support the continuation of the Healthy@Home program. Healthy@Home serves low-income families with significant psychosocial needs and have one or more children with on-going intensive healthcare needs who are institutionalized beyond medical need or who are at risk of hospitalization or placement in long-term care settings.

## **Doula Expansion Fund**

The Caucus calls on the state to establish a dedicated fund to support community-based doulas and community-based doula organizations. This fund would be assisting those trying to navigate the Federal and State Medicaid frameworks for doula care to become community-based doulas.

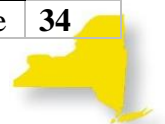
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## **Safer Consumption Services Act**

The Safer Consumption Services Act (SCS Act) allows local health districts and the New York State Department of Health to authorize community-based organizations to operate as safer consumption spaces (SCS), in which people can legally consume previously purchased illicit drugs with supervision from trained staff.

## **Reproductive Freedom Equity Fund**

The Reproductive Freedom Equity Fund would create a mechanism to drive grant funds to improve abortion access in New York. Under this program, the NYS Department of Health would issue grant funding for which abortion providers and non-profit organizations that facilitate access to care are eligible to apply. In recent years, states have continuously restricted access to abortion, effectively banning abortion in some parts of the country. Between navigating legal requirements and delays, affording the cost of care and travel, and managing associated costs such as childcare, lodging, and lost wages, abortion access in the U.S. is already in a perilous position. The Caucus supports \$50 million in state funding towards this goal.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: MENTAL HYGIENE

**Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA):** The Executive proposes a 1.5 percent COLA to increase wages for voluntary mental hygiene service providers. For the mental hygiene agencies, the state share of the COLA is comprised of a total investment of \$120.4 million with \$74.2 million allocated to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), \$37.0 million allocated to the Office of Mental Health (OMH), and \$9.3 million allocated to the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS).

**Minimum Wage:** The Executive proposal would include an additional \$57 million for minimum wage increases for staff at voluntary not-for-profits licensed under OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS.

**Expand Inpatient Bed Capacity:** The Executive proposal includes \$22 million in funding to open 125 additional state-operated inpatient psychiatric beds, including 15 for children and adolescents, 85 for adults, and 25 forensic.

**Transition to Home Units (THU):** The Executive proposal includes \$37 million in funding to support 75 THU beds in one state-operated and two community-based facilities.

**Opioid Settlement Fund:** The Executive proposal appropriates \$63.7 million from the Opioid Settlement Fund. Funding would be utilized to continue investments in various initiatives that address the opioid crisis, based on the recommendations provided by the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024-25.

**Increase Support for Existing Residential Programs:** The Executive includes \$43 million to increase stipends for over 17,000 housing units supported under the program.

**New Service Opportunities:** The Executive proposal includes \$30 million (\$60 million annualized) in SFY 2024-25 to fund OPWDD priority program reforms and new service opportunities. These funds leverage federal resources for a gross increase of \$120 million annually.





## 2024 PEOPLE’S BUDGET

*“A Demand for Justice”*

### **HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE**

#### **Mental Health**

##### **Office of Addiction & Mental Services**

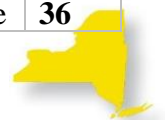
The Caucus endorses the initiative to merge two state agencies, the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), forming a new state agency called the Office of Addiction and Mental Health Services. The integration is crucial to address the complex interplay between mental health and addiction.

##### **Daniel’s Law**

In the continued remembrance of the life of Daniel Prude, Daniel’s Law will ensure a community based, non-police, monitored and planned statewide response framework to better serve anyone in New York State experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis. New Yorkers of color, who have mental health diagnoses, face extreme coercion and limited treatment options from the State. The Caucus continues to support investing in the statewide emergency and crisis response council as well as the operation and financing of high-quality emergency and crisis services for persons experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.

##### **Maternal Mental Health**

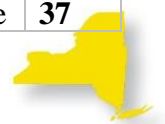
Mothers experience maternal mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety during the perinatal period—one year before and up to two years after a pregnancy. Combating these issues should be a priority of New York State, especially when black women experience a higher prevalence of maternal mental health conditions. Rates among Black women for postpartum depression and postpartum anxiety are especially concerning. In tandem with higher rates of conditions, black pregnant persons see their conditions and issues largely underreported, and unaddressed. The following initiatives aim to combat these systemic issues.



## **Youth Mental Health**

Recent events like the pandemic have highlighted that youth mental health is at an all time crisis point that needs immediate and bold remedies. To that end, the Caucus is advocating for the below proposals:

- School Counselors/Social Workers/Psychologists Study - increase the number of school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists across New York.
- Youth Telehealth - Establish a telehealth initiative to offer up to five, free mental health services to eligible youth.
- Black Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force - Establish a black youth suicide prevention task force to examine, evaluate, and determine how to improve the mental health and suicide prevention rates for New York's Black youth ages 5 through 18.
- Enhancing student mental health and mental health literacy in New York's higher education institutions, mandating the adoption of relevant protocols, policies, and programs in SUNY, CUNY, and independent institutions of higher education.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: EDUCATION

**General Support for Public Schools (GSPS):** The Executive proposes \$35.3 billion in total School Aid for the 2024-25 School Year (SY), an increase of \$825 million or 2.4 percent over SY 2023-24, which includes a \$218 million increase in Expense-Based Aids.

**Foundation Aid:** The Executive proposal provides a total of \$24.5 billion for Foundation Aid, a \$507 million increase over SY 2023-24. The proposal would remove Foundation Aid's hold harmless provision, no longer guaranteeing a district will receive at a minimum the amount of Foundation Aid they had received in the prior year. The Executive includes a \$207 million transition adjustment to moderate the impact of this elimination.

**Reading Instruction:** The Executive provides \$10 million to support training for 20,000 elementary school teachers and teaching assistants across the state as part of a proposed shift in reading instruction.

**Special Education:** The Executive provides an additional \$1.4 million for a study by the State Education Department to design a new special education tuition rate-setting methodology, for a total of \$3.9 million and extends the redesign deadline from 2025 to 2027.

**Nonpublic Schools:** The Executive provides \$239 million in aid to reimburse nonpublic schools for state-mandated costs, a \$44 million increase.

**Mayoral Control:** The Executive proposes a four-year extension of mayoral control of the New York City School District.



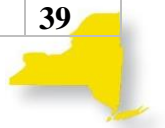


## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **EDUCATION & HIGHER EDUCATION**



“The Vision Fund at the International Studio & Curatorial Program gave me time and space to explore new ways of making art in a safe caring environment. I felt the freedom to make new work while also having the unconditional support of a thoughtful and caring community. From the staff, to the other artists in residence, the people I met at ISCP continue to be a highly respected and valued part of my life. I am so grateful for my time there and I will hold it in my heart forever.” - *Artist-in-residence Dana Robinson, April 2023, recipient of the Vision Fund residency dedicated to the creative development of New York-based BIPOC visual artists*





## Education

### **Foundation Aid Funding/ Class Sizes**

The Caucus continues to support the full funding of Foundation Aid with a phase-in plan. New York's students have been shortchanged for decades. Ensuring a sound, basic education is not a choice for the state government, it is a moral responsibility and, as the courts have said, also a constitutional requirement. New York State must continue to fulfill the promise of CFE and fully fund the Foundation Aid for schools. Additionally, the Caucus calls for an update to the foundation aid formula.

### **Expand Student Access to Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

The Caucus supports efforts to provide access to high quality career and technical education (CTE) to advance student learning and expand New York State's economy. For FY 2024-25, we urge an investment of \$1.4 million for 14 staff to manage increased volume of CTE program approvals.

### **Supporting the Blue-Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures**

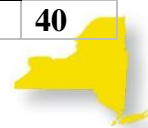
This Commission will review research, practice, and policy to gather input from statewide stakeholders on diploma requirements to ensure all students have access to multiple graduation measures. The funding request would support project management costs and event costs associated with the statewide Commission meetings. The Caucus supports \$200,000 in funding (annually for 2 years).

### **Creating Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Resources**

Funding is necessary to curate, compile, and publish a set of racially and culturally inclusive education resources. This would support teaching and learning by using an interdisciplinary approach in the major subject areas with an additional \$50,000 in 2024-2025 to finalize the work that goes beyond the fiscal year. The Caucus supports \$250,000 towards creating culturally responsive sustaining education resources.

### **Increase Teacher Diversity**

According to the 2019 NYSED report titled "Educator Diversity Report", New York's students of color population is 50%. The racial and ethnic composition of the teacher workforce does not reflect the diversity of the student population. Teachers of color are underrepresented statewide. Access to a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce is beneficial for all students, particularly for students of color, who often thrive in classrooms led by teachers who share their racial and cultural backgrounds. The Caucus supports \$5 million towards enhancing teacher diversity.



## **Appropriately Resourcing State Aid Oversight & Monitoring**

The Office of Education Finance collects and reviews tens of thousands of data points annually to calculate and pay nearly \$30 billion in state funds to districts across the state. The State Aid Office is not staffed sufficiently to perform these tasks. Currently, the State Aid Office has eight professional staff responsible for reviewing all aid claims, three professional staff responsible for making thousands of payments to districts totaling billions of state funds and three professional staff responsible for all data used in state aid claims and calculations.

The Office of Education Finance comprises two units: State Aid and Fiscal Analysis. The State Aid Office's primary function is to calculate aid payments to districts per the education law and other state laws. As part of this function, the unit maintains a large data collection process where thousands of points of data are collected annually from each district, as well as many other units and state agencies. This data must be processed appropriately and reviewed for accuracy. The Caucus supports \$1.85 million for staffing needs.

## **Early Childhood Education**

Early care and learning programs, beginning from birth to kindergarten, provide the foundation children need to be successful both as students and as adults. Decades of research has established that children in low-income communities and at-risk children benefit the most from high-quality child-care programs and pre-Kindergarten. In New York State, we have made progress in several areas at a very slow pace. Outside of New York City, there are still almost 80,000 children without access to full day pre-K. In Long Island, for example, the vast majority of high-needs children lack access to full day pre-K programs. Long Island is an area with stark socioeconomic differences, with school districts that are racially segregated and overwhelmingly low income. Investing at least \$150 million in expanding quality full day pre-K across New York State would benefit the high-need districts in Long Island and across the state. Additionally, the Caucus is advocating for \$2 million to address early literacy.

## **Universal Afterschool Pilot Program**

The Caucus supports the establishment of a Universal Afterschool Pilot Program, funded by the state, to provide after-school programming for schools in the five most underfunded community districts in NYC. These districts, identified using the City's poverty measure, include Brooklyn CD 16, Bronx CD 5, Manhattan CD 11, Queens CD 4, and Staten Island CD 1. The program aims to benefit hard-working parents by relieving childcare responsibilities, engage children during peak hours of youth violence, ensure food security by providing dinner and deliver long-term positive impacts through additional learning and recreation. The initial investment is estimated to range from \$10 to \$30 million, offering substantial benefits over time and aligning with the state's commitment to education funding.



## **Enhancing Oversight of Pre-K Programs**

The Office of Early Learning oversees \$970 million in the State's investment into pre-K as well as the registration and renewals of Voluntary Registered Nursery Schools and Kindergartens. This currently includes 626 districts, 12 agencies and three BOCES. Since 2019, the Office has received an additional \$120 million in pre-K funding to administer 143 new districts to oversee, with no additional staff to get this important work completed. This has caused a delay in getting funds to the district in a timely manner and prevents important pre-K oversight work and program visits from occurring. As the Caucus advocates for a universal pre-K system statewide, it is crucial that NYSED offices have the financial support needed for quality assurance. The Caucus supports a \$1.9 million allocation to help address the staffing needs in the Office of Early Learning.

## **Expanding Afterschool Programming**

The Caucus supports allocating \$219 million to enhance and support afterschool programs, addressing issues like contract challenges and terminations that affected 45 programs, limiting access for around 8,430 students. This proposed investment represents a \$127 million increase from current funding for programs like the Empire State and Advantage afterschool initiatives, with a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

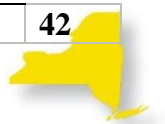
Additionally, the Caucus supports line-item funding of \$5 million to establish statewide afterschool technical assistance through the NYS Network for Youth Success along with \$1 million to support the New Alternative for Children in NYC.

## **Healthy School Meals for All**

Providing school meals at no cost to all students is a proven strategy to reduce food insecurity, improve mental and physical health, alleviate stigma and administrative barriers to meal access and support local food purchasing. As food insecurity disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx households, the Caucus advocates for Healthy School Meals for All as a meaningful step to advance racial equity in health and education. The state needs an additional \$65 million to reach full universal meals for all.

## **Improving Justice System Education Opportunities and Outcomes for Youth**

When youth must be confined, detention and placement settings provide an opportunity to re-engage them in their education and future and to reset their trajectory. To do this, educational programs in these settings need the ability to quickly access student records and to perform educational assessment. Educational programs also need the flexibility to design developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, engaging individual education plans. These may include, for example, credit recovery, special education services, career and technical education, access to career. The Caucus supports \$6.1 million towards improving justice system education opportunities and outcomes for youth.



## **Caucus Support for Juvenile Justice Hybrid Programming**

The Caucus extends its full support to the Board's proposal for Juvenile Justice Hybrid Programming, allocating \$20 million. Leveraging the lessons learned from virtual instruction, this initiative aims to create a statewide hybrid high school in collaboration with the Office of Children and Family Services. The program is designed to cater to students in juvenile justice settings who cannot attend traditional school programs. Certified teachers would be employed to provide instructional programs, combining onsite staff support and online coursework costs. Operating costs would align with current funding mechanisms for school districts, with startup funding provided for design and implementation.

## **Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC)**

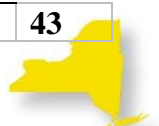
The Department of Education created PLC in 2012 to help educators improve school culture by moving away from punitive disciplinary systems that relied heavily on suspensions. For nearly a decade, PLC has successfully used social-emotional strategies, evidence-based training, and healing practices to overcome systemic barriers that hinder learning and turn schools into joyful communities in which to learn and grow. Reliance on suspensions in 40 PLC schools declined by 46% over the last 10 years and student surveys gauging positive climate increased by over 50%. PLC's team of clinicians and public-school educators, including social workers, counselors, psychologists, and behavioral specialists, works with a school's existing staff to build on their existing strengths and integrate a multi-tiered model of best practices. The Caucus is requesting \$2 million to sustain this vital program.

## **My Brother's Keeper**

In 2016, New York led the way by becoming the first state in the nation to sign My Brother's Keeper into law. The program has been instrumental in providing new pathways and opportunities to young men of color. The Caucus supports a continuation of \$18 million in state funding to support the My Brother's Keeper program.

## **The Timbuctoo Pipeline – A Summer Climate and Careers Institute**

The Adirondack Park is a national treasure, one that will play a central role in New York's effort to combat climate change. The fight for environmental stability and social justice demands that we must better connect the Adirondack Park with communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. The Adirondacks were a cradle of the early abolition and suffrage movements, dating back to the mid-1800's with the establishment of 3,000 black suffrage settlements. In the spirit of the opportunities created by that movement, Timbuctoo Summer Climate Careers Institute held its inaugural season in 2023, introducing high school students to careers in the environmental field. The Caucus calls for \$2.1 million in continued funding to keep the program growing.



## **Supporting 4201 Schools**

The Caucus supports \$30 million over three years to close the direct care wage gap in 4201 schools.

## **Increasing State Aid for Library Construction**

Libraries are community institutions that provide wrap-around services which go beyond their mission statements. We must fully recognize their role in working class communities while providing the structural support needed for libraries to continue providing vital services and resources to New Yorkers. The Caucus supports an increase of \$11 million in funding to better ensure that all New Yorkers continue to have access to state-of-the-art libraries.

## **Capital Needs of the Indigenous and State Operated Schools**

The Caucus supports efforts by SED to ensure that the health and structural needs of Indigenous and State Operated Schools are met as required by the state's constitution. To that end, we support the following investments:

- \$250,000 to conduct Building Condition Surveys (BCS) every five years at the Elementary Schools located in Tuscarora, St. Regis, and Onondaga and the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind.
- capital funding provided on a rolling model based on the maximum cost allowance (MCA) to provide an annual amount of funding, linked to current building square footage and enrollment; and
- funding for each school to meet immediate health and safety needs:
  - Tuscarora Nation School - \$6.6 million
  - Onondaga Nation School - \$11.2 million
  - St. Regis Mohawk Nation School - \$2.3 million
  - Rome School for the Deaf - \$3 million
  - Batavia School for the Blind - \$4.47 million

## **988 Mental Crisis Line on Student IDs**

The Caucus supports addressing the serious issue of suicide among college students by including contact information for mental health resources on their identification cards. With suicide being the second leading cause of death for college students, this initiative aims to raise awareness and ensure quick access to essential resources for those in need.

## **United Community Schools**

The Caucus calls for a \$4 million grant to maintain the existing network of community schools. Furthermore, they advocate for \$100 million in categorical aid for community schools statewide, with a specific \$5 million allocation to United Community Schools for comprehensive technical assistance and support across the state.



## **School Mental Health Professionals**

Amid current economic and political uncertainties, there is a rise in stress and worry among families and children due to factors like loss of income, rising debt, unemployment, housing instability and hunger. The Caucus supports the inclusion of full-time licensed social workers and psychologists in all elementary, intermediate, middle, junior, and senior high schools in New York State. Recognizing the daily challenges children face by having dedicated professionals can help address and prevent long-term problems, ensuring students reach their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally.

## **Supporting the UFT Teacher Center**

For over four decades, the UFT Teacher Center has been a beacon for professional development in NYC school communities. Operating in 118 sites across the city during the 2021-2022 school year, it delivered 126,000 hours of transformative development to over 281,000 participants. The Caucus pushes for an increased budget of \$28.5 million for the statewide expansion of the Teacher Center program.

## **An Exhibit on the African American Experience in the Adirondacks**

*Adirondack Experience* (ADKX), a museum in the heart of the Adirondacks, plans to create a permanent exhibition on the history of the African American experience in the Adirondacks, a story that has been overlooked and neglected for too long. A major exhibition will inform Adirondack residents and visitors about the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century voting rights movement that led Black people to acquire land in the Adirondacks. This exhibit, along with other educational experiences throughout the region, will help foster a more welcoming and inclusive Adirondack Park for residents and visitors alike. The Caucus supports \$3 million to help establish this program.

## **Continuing Access to the NYS Summer School of the Arts**

The Caucus Advocates state funding to ensure that NYSSSA can remain available to all eligible students, regardless of financial need and to reduce the negative balance in the Cultural Education account. The Caucus supports \$2 million to ensure continual access to the NYSSSA.

## **School Gardens and Green Spaces for Learning**

The Caucus is advocating for a state investment in school gardens and green spaces for learning in public elementary and secondary schools, especially schools serving disinvested communities of color with limited access to open green spaces. Garden education has been shown to improve academic performance, especially in science and math; increase feelings of safety and healing from trauma and improve healthy eating attitudes and behaviors. Further, school gardens support more equitable and culturally responsive education as they are welcoming spaces for all types of learners, including English Language Learners. We support \$2 million in new state funding to provide grant funding to schools.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: HIGHER EDUCATION

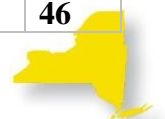
**Operating Support for the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY):** The Executive provides \$207 million in new recurring operating support, which will provide \$100 million to SUNY state-operated campuses and \$107 million to CUNY senior colleges.

**Community College Funding Floor:** The Executive proposes to maintain the community college funding floor at 100 percent of prior year funding, providing \$416.7 million to SUNY and \$218 million to CUNY Community College.

**Capital Projects:** The Executive proposal includes \$1.2 billion for capital projects, providing \$650 million for SUNY state-operated campuses, \$384 million for CUNY senior colleges, \$138 million for SUNY community colleges, and \$16 million for CUNY community colleges.

**Limiting Bundy Aid:** The Executive proposal would limit eligibility for Unrestricted Aid to Independent Colleges and Universities (Bundy Aid) to institutions with endowments worth less than \$750 million. Bundy Aid would total \$15.8 million, a \$19 million decrease from SFY 2023-24.

**Opportunity Programs:** The Executive proposal would provide \$197 million to fund higher education opportunity programs administered by CUNY, SUNY, and private colleges, a \$6 million decrease from SFY 2023-24.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **EDUCATION & HIGHER EDUCATION**

#### **Higher Education**

##### **A New Deal for CUNY & SUNY**

A \$1.7 billion investment, over 5 years, for the SUNY and CUNY systems would fund free tuition for the public university systems, the hiring of more full-time faculty, the establishment of a faculty to student ratio, the hiring of more counselors and mental health professionals and the creation of a capital plan for the public university systems. The Caucus is advocating for a New Deal for CUNY, in order to establish new pathways for social mobility

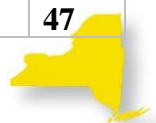
Furthermore, the Caucus calls for a designated \$5 million to both CUNY Medgar Evers College as well as York College to make up for long term disinvestments.

##### **Supporting NYS Access and Opportunity Programs**

The Caucus is calling for a \$11.1 million increase for the state's higher education opportunity programs, which are available to students attending college and provides access to higher education for students who might not otherwise be able to attend college. Those programs include, the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), and the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP).

##### **Improving the Educator Certification Process**

The State Education Department has made noted efforts to improve the current teacher and school building leader certification review process time frames including, but not limited to, a technology modernization project to maximize automation of the certification process, improving self-service conveniences for applicants and increasing staffing levels in the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI). The Caucus urges the Executive to provide access to the entire \$8 million prior year balance to fund and support NYSED's goal of improving the educator certification process.





## **Enhancing Supports and Services for Postsecondary Success of Students with Disabilities**

The Caucus supports \$2 million in funding to support the reasonable accommodation needs and services for individuals with disabilities enrolled at degree granting institutions of higher education.

## **Foster Youth College Success Initiative**

Over the past seven years, the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI) has helped approximately 2,000 students, primarily with a foster care background, attend more than 100 different public and private colleges in New York State. The Caucus is requesting an allocation of \$10 million in the FY 2024-2025 budget, which will assist foster youth, orphans, and wards of the court to apply, attend, and graduate from higher education institutions in the State. Additionally, the Caucus calls on SED and OCFS to prepare posters and pamphlets with information regarding higher education opportunities for foster youth.

## **Diversity in Medicine**

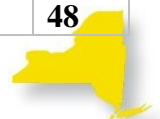
Ensuring diversity in the physician workforce is a key component to improving health outcomes in communities of color. There is a wealth of research demonstrating that diverse physicians and racially concordant health care providers result in better outcomes. A recent study even showed that Black infant mortality rates were cut in half when the treating physician was Black. Diversity in the physician workforce is critical in New York State, and the Caucus supports \$4 million in funding to sustain the program.

## **District Attorney and Indigent Legal Service Attorney Loan Forgiveness Program**

Rising law school tuition and increasing debt loads have driven talented professionals away, resulting in high attrition rates and depriving low-income New Yorkers of experienced representation. That is why the Caucus advocates for an increase in the student loan forgiveness award from \$8,000 per annum for public defenders, district attorneys, and indigent legal service attorneys. The proposed increase aims to alleviate debt burdens and encourage public interest attorneys to continue serving their communities.

## **Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program**

To support New York borrowers, the Caucus supports an allocation of \$3.5 million to the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP) in FY25 to meet the growing demand for services. This funding will support EDCAP in maintaining helpline capacity and coverage, ensuring continued assistance to borrowers in understanding repayment options, applying for forgiveness programs and addressing student loan challenges.



## **Emergency Contraception on College Campuses**

According to the Guttmacher Institute study, low income, African American, and women ages 18-24 have disproportionately higher rates of unintended pregnancy. The provision of emergency contraception on city and state campuses is a form of reproductive care which can prevent students from having unintended pregnancies. The Caucus supports requiring each institution within the state university of New York and the city university of New York to have at least one vending machine making emergency contraception available for purchase.

## **Expand the Educational Incentive Program**

The Caucus supports an additional \$3 million through CCDBG professional development allocation to expand the Educational Incentive Program (EIP). The Educational Incentive Program (EIP) provides scholarships for credentialing activities, college credit-bearing coursework and non-credit bearing training to help childcare workers, including afterschool staff, develop professionally. Currently, the State provides up to \$17.4 million for services and expenses of childcare scholarships, education, and ongoing professional development.

## **School Psychologist Licensure**

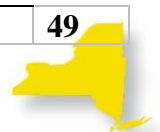
The increasing social and emotional needs of students, heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscore the importance of extending support beyond traditional settings. Post-pandemic, enabling school psychologists to assist children outside conventional contexts is crucial. Expanding the number of trained individuals capable of aiding students beyond school environments will benefit children, parents, schools, and society. School psychologists possess expertise in learning, motivation, and human development, addressing various factors influencing student performance, including school diversity, climate, and community collaboration. Offering prevention services, assessments and counseling, school psychologists contribute to students' future success. Establishing specific standards and requirements ensures competent services. The Caucus supports the proposal to provide schools with a framework for employing licensed school psychologists, meeting the evolving needs of students and families.

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## **Addressing Affirmative Action**

### **Accelerated Study in Associate Programs**

The Caucus supports sustained state funding for evidence-based completion program models Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE). These programs have been shown in randomized controlled trials to significantly improve associate and bachelor's degree completion rates and help close opportunity gaps. Support includes tuition waivers, funding to help with commuting expenses and textbooks, academic assistance, comprehensive personalized advisement, and career development activities.



## **Expand Tuition Assistance Program**

New York State offers some of the most comprehensive and generous financial assistance programs to support students in pursuing higher education, surpassing other states in the nation. Various financial aid initiatives, including the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and more, contribute to enabling 53% of full-time New York State resident undergraduates to attend college tuition-free. The income threshold for eligibility to receive TAP has remained unchanged since the year 2000, set at \$80,000. The Caucus supports the proposal to align the TAP income eligibility threshold with inflation by raising it to \$110,000. This substantial measure would greatly assist numerous hard-working, middle-class families in affording higher education and attaining upward socioeconomic mobility.

## **Educational Opportunity Program**

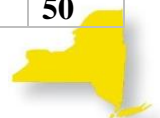
Since its inception in 1967, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has provided access, academic support, and supplemental financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. In its 57-year history, the EOP has served more than 78,000 students and evolved into one of the country's most successful college access programs. The Caucus calls on the state to expand the eligibility of the and replicate the Pre-Med EOP program by expanding to other professional areas like law and mental health.

## **Higher Education Opportunity Programs**

The Caucus backs the allocation of \$11.1 million for opportunity programs like STEP and CSTEP at the high school level. These programs aim to increase the participation of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students in college, focusing on mathematics, science, technology, health-related fields, and licensed professions. The Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) offers pre-collegiate and dropout prevention programs across diverse communities in NYS. HEOP supports students facing educational and economic challenges, providing academic support, tuition assistance, and financial aid. Additional funding will expand the reach of these programs, benefiting more students.

## **Extending Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) for Students with Disabilities**

The Caucus fervently supports the endeavor to align New York State Law with the Second Circuit Court of Appeals' decision in *A.R. v. Connecticut Board of Education*. This alignment is crucial to ensuring that public schools provide special education and related services to resident students with disabilities until they turn 22 years old. The Caucus backs \$19.05 million in funding, which includes increased reimbursement for public excess cost aid, private excess cost aid and foundation aid to facilitate the successful implementation of this initiative.

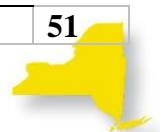


## **Supporting Educational Providers with Residential Programs**

The Caucus stands firmly behind the recommendation to support educational providers with \$19 million in the budget towards residential programs. Recognizing the challenges faced by residential facilities for students receiving special education services, the Caucus endorses the proposed amendments to the statute. These changes seek to make providers whole when tuition cannot be billed due to adult placements, ensuring financial stability for the providers, and maintaining availability for residential placements of school-aged students. Moreover, the Caucus advocates for the collaborative efforts of state agencies overseeing such placements to guarantee sufficient residential capacity for all placements in both adult and school-aged settings.

## **Career and Technical Education**

The Caucus supports the Regents' recommendation to address the limitations on Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. This includes advocating for an increase in the salary limit for BOCES aid to \$60,000 over the next three years. Such support is crucial to encourage the expansion of CTE opportunities and to ensure broader accessibility for students. The Caucus also endorses a similar approach to enhance Special Services aids, extending support to students in career, technical, occupational, and business education programs, particularly in districts not affiliated with BOCES, such as the Big Five City school districts.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: HUMAN SERVICES

**Migrant Services and Assistance:** The Executive proposes \$2.4 billion in funding to assist with the costs of various services and assistance for asylum seekers arriving in New York State.

**Housing Initiatives:** The Executive includes proposals related to housing development in New York City, including a deadline extension for certain 421-a projects and new tax incentives.

**Redevelopment of Underutilized Sites for Housing (NY-RUSH):** The Executive proposes \$250 million to support the repurposing of property owned by state agencies for use as housing.

**Child Care Workforce Incentives:** The Executive proposal allocates \$280 million in remaining federal pandemic funds towards the continuation of the Workforce Retention Grant program.

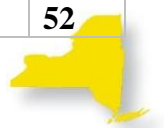
**Anti-Poverty Efforts in Rochester, Syracuse, and Buffalo:** The Executive proposes \$50 million in one-time Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) resources to address immediate needs of children and families living in poverty in these localities.

**Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Food Benefits:** The Executive proposes \$13 million to implement a federal program to provide EBT benefits to low-income families with school-aged children during summer months.

**Resilient and Ready Program:** The Executive proposal includes \$40 million for a new Resilient and Ready Fund to provide assistance for emergency home repairs resulting from natural disasters.

**COVID-19 Sick Leave:** The Executive proposal includes language which would sunset the state's COVID-19 Sick Leave law on July 31, 2024.

**Human Services Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA):** The Executive proposes a 1.5 percent COLA for human services agencies.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET "A Demand for Justice"

### **HUMAN SERVICES**



March 18, 2023 was a day when I felt the vibrancy of my Korean-American identity, intertwined with that always bothersome question of what it means to be American. As I walked into Korean Community Services' building, I was struck by how much the event truly meant to me as it was a celebration of the life and legacy of Yu Gwan-Sun, a Korean Independence Movement activist.

I realized that culture programs and others celebrating Asian American culture are much more important than I originally thought. Firstly, they serve as a space for sharing and building an emotional and intellectual bridge linking the many communities. Secondly, they facilitate a deeper understanding of our rich Korean history, traditions, and heritage through the lens of history, art, and culture. I've attended several events hosted by KCS, but the event honoring Yu Gwan-Sun held a special resonance. I grew up in a multicultural neighborhood where my Korean heritage was often overlooked and downplayed. When the Senate of New York instituted an official day in honor of Yu Gwan-Sun in 2019, for her 100th anniversary, it made me realize that my heritage wasn't just a sidebar in the American story.

On March 18, as we delved into the life of Yu Gwan-Sun, her courage and resilience inspired me in ways I had never felt before. Here was a young girl, a human rights activist, who fought passionately for Korea's independence. She was imprisoned, tortured, but her spirit never broke. The more I learned, the more I felt this incredible surge of empowerment and a connection to my own history. As the event proceeded, members from different communities shared their own stories and perspectives. It became evident that our struggles, while unique, were just single threads in the same fabric, and that our backgrounds were more similar than any of us could have imagined. My heritage, my struggles, and my aspirations as a Korean-American were not isolated fragments, but part of a shared experience that made us all stronger.

The event helped me realize that understanding my culture and history is not an act of segregation or otherness, but a cornerstone in establishing my own 'American' identity. I came away with the realization that celebrating my heritage doesn't make me less American, but helps enriches the definition of what it means to be an American. I am grateful to KCS for hosting this important event and grateful that my representatives in the New York State legislature also recognize the importance of supporting these cultural programs. - S. Hwang, New York Resident.



## **Nutrition Assistance Programs**

No child or vulnerable adult experiencing hunger should lack access to sustenance, particularly fresh and healthy food. Accordingly, it is critical to strengthen food access and security programs by continuing and increasing funding for programs including, but not necessarily limited to, Nourish New York, Wellness in Nutrition (WIN), the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), SNAP Outreach Program and the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP). The Caucus recommends maintaining funding of \$5.45 million for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), New York's largest SNAP outreach, education, and application assistance program.

## **Enhancing SNAP Benefits**

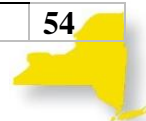
Food insecurity is on the rise with recent studies finding that from 2020 to 2022, 2.2 million New York state residents live in food insecure households, with 15% being children and 8% being older adults. This disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color. According to the Office of the New York State Comptroller, over the last two years, Black and Hispanic or Latino adult New Yorkers were more likely to report food insufficiency than both white adult New Yorkers and adult New Yorkers overall. Upstate cities including Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester report the highest number of SNAP applications in New York State. The Caucus supports increasing the SNAP minimum monthly benefit from \$23 to \$100.

## **Investing in Human Services Providers**

In 2006, New York State established the Human Services Cost of Living Adjustment, linking annual increases to service provider rates and contracts with inflation. However, this adjustment has consistently been "not withstood," resulting in stagnant provider rates. Agencies supporting vulnerable individuals under the jurisdiction of the Office of Mental Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Office of Addiction Services and Supports, Office of Temporary Disability Assistance and the Office of Children and Family Services require this annual rate increase to sustain operations and address inflationary cost hikes. Therefore, the Caucus supports the inclusion of a 3.2% Cost of Living Adjustment, based on the July 2023 CPI-U, in the 2024-25 Budget.

## **AAPI Equity Budget**

The Caucus Supports the AAPI Equity Budget investment \$54.35 Million of in the State Budget, and is recommitting its push for even greater budget parity in order to achieve true equity within AAPI communities. \$50 Million For critical funding and resources to support over 130 community-based organizations (CBOs) providing community-informed, culturally relevant, and language-accessible programs meeting the rising needs of AAPI New Yorkers. Funds will be used to support critical social and health services, community programs that promote the safety and well-being of communities, and that combat bias and hate throughout New York State:



## **A Livable Wage for Human Services Workers**

New York must establish a living wage for all State government-contracted human services workers at a rate no less than \$21 an hour, providing pay comparable with government employees holding similar nonprofessional job titles in the human services agencies.

The Caucus also supports establishing a wage and benefit schedule for all government-contracted human services workers to put them on an equal footing with comparable City and State employees. Once established, these compensation benchmarks would be incorporated into all contracts, along with funding to support career advancement and promotion opportunities. The City and State should phase in funding increases to achieve full compensation parity, and immediately establish a reserve for recruitment and retention to stabilize the contracted human services workforce. Moreover, an automatic annual COLA should be incorporated into all human services contracts, not as a substitute for comparable pay but to ensure that pay parity is maintained on a continuing basis. If a 3% increase to COLA was implemented for workers on New York State contracts, the cost would be \$120 million statewide.

COLA shall be pegged to the consumer price index increase for Human Services Programs including previously omitted OTDA programs (STEHP, NYSHP) and expanded to all titles funded under the contracts.

## **Raising the Wages of I/DD Sector Direct Support Professionals**

New York State faces a critical issue affecting the quality of life for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) – the plight of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). Employed by non-profit agencies, DSPs play a vital role in delivering essential services but suffer from persistently low wages due to years of state underinvestment. This has led to a staffing crisis in the I/DD sector, jeopardizing vulnerable New Yorkers.

DSPs comprise a majority-minority workforce, with 74.2% of DSPs identifying as women and 62.6% DSPs identified as Black, African American, Asian, or Latino. All DSPs undertake multifaceted responsibilities, including skill development, personalized care plans, behavioral support, advocacy, community inclusion, health and safety monitoring and documentation. Their crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for individuals with I/DD and promoting community integration is evident.

As of July 2023, non-profit DSPs earn an average starting wage of \$16.02 per hour statewide, significantly lower than OPWDD-employed DSPs. This wage disparity contributes to a staffing crisis, with non-profit agencies reporting a 17.2% staff vacancy and a 31.1% annual turnover rate.

To address this crisis, the Caucus recommends that the State establish a Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE), providing non-profit agencies with an annual funding allocation of \$4,000 per eligible employee. This initiative aims to increase DSP wages by approximately \$2.00 per hour.





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## **Prioritizing Children & Families**

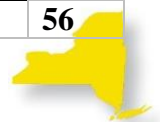
### **Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services**

Universal newborn nurse home visiting will positively affect families and communities historically impacted by systemically inequitable medical practices and economic conditions. Targeting New York's most marginalized, this initiative will close the racial and economic care-gap that has led to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. Poverty, poor mental and physical health, high juvenile crime rates, adverse childhood experiences and poor academic performance are prevalent within disadvantaged communities due to systemic inequities built into policy, such as unequal access to healthcare and education.

Newborn nurse home visiting services are not readily available to all enrolled persons covered by insurance. This service is aimed at improving outcomes in one or more of the following: child health and development, school readiness, family financial self-sufficiency, maternal health, positive parenting, reducing adverse childhood experiences, reducing family violence, and reducing crime. This will be achieved through education, promotion of positive interaction between mother and newborn to influence growth and development while offering other guidance to mothers that otherwise would be difficult to afford. The Caucus advocates for an allocation of \$175 million in support of this program.

### **The Universal Child Care Act**

New York's child care infrastructure is in crisis: many parents have no access to affordable or quality care and many child care providers earn below the minimum wage. Although some piecemeal approaches and temporary solutions have kept New York's child care system on life support, many child care centers have already been forced to close, and parents are struggling to access the child care they need. The demands of parents and providers for meaningful action on child care have been ignored for far too long. We saw the extraordinary damage this has caused, and we know that the industry is on the verge of collapse. New York cannot afford to continue to ignore this or to meet it with another band-aid solution. In order to address the crisis on the scale it requires, we need to pass the Universal Child Care Act, and move towards a child care system that is universal, like our public-school system, and which pays our childcare workers at parity with our public-school educators. This will require a \$5 billion commitment in this year's budget, the implementation of a four-year phase-in towards a universal program, a permanent state child care fund to increase child care worker compensation (\$1.2 billion for the first year), committing New York State to a new cost-estimation model for determining child care reimbursement rates, covering immigrant children who are not otherwise covered by New York's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), statewide presumptive eligibility for child care assistance, decoupling parent work requirements, and increased payment rates for child care providers serving hard to reach populations.



## **Quality Child Care Workforce Compensation Program**

The Caucus supports the creation of a Quality Child Care Workforce Compensation Program. The economics of childcare are such that market forces alone will never be able to adequately fund high-quality care and wages for the sector. For our system to survive, government intervention is required to offer competitive compensation to childcare professionals. Modeled after similar initiatives in Washington, D.C. and New Mexico, this wage enhancement program would offer significant and sustained wage supplements to all licensed and registered providers in New York State as an interim strategy while the NYS Child Care Availability Task Force develops a compensation scale and structure.

Moreover, New York should also follow the lead of New York City and establish a state-funded, statewide Excluded Families Child Care Subsidy program to provide childcare subsidies to immigrant families whose children are barred from accessing federal CCDBG subsidies on the same terms as all other families. All New York families need and deserve childcare in all corners of the state.

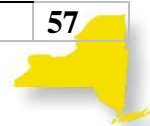
## **Procurement Commission**

The state must commit to transformative human services programs, which means those services that are designed in partnership with providers and communities to get at the root cause of the issues. To do so, New York must undertake a rethinking of the entire procurement system. A start of such an effort would be creating a Procurement Commission that redesigns the procurement system.

The Caucus supports the creation of a Procurement Commission to: focus on the well-being of clients in communities that nonprofits serve in conjunction with how programs are designed and implemented, encourage continuity and competition so that nonprofits of all sizes have access to government contracts, guarantee timely payments that cover the full cost of services so that the sector can focus on delivering high quality programs without the threat to sustainability, create consistency and transparency in processes across all contracting agencies which are currently not aligned in their expectations, communication, and procurement protocols with providers, and support racial and social equity and leverage funding as a direct response to community needs and conditions that produce injustice.

## **COVID-19 Baby Bonds**

Over 16,000 children in New York have lost a parent or caregiver to COVID. To help address these tragic incidents, the Caucus supports creating a savings account with \$1,000 for eligible children and \$1,000 added each year of eligibility. The account will be accessible on the child's 18th birthday, and can only be used for education, the purchase of a home or starting a business.



## **Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow**

Founded in 1983, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT) has served New York City residents by empowering youth and adults from low-income communities through job training, education, employment, and immigration services. The Caucus supports allocating \$500,000 to expand resources for OBT alumni so that they can build wealth, confront NYC’s affordability crisis, and secure jobs with higher pay and benefits. By building out their alumni network, providing ongoing career and college counseling support and incorporating financial empowerment programming into alumni meetings, OBT can better address structural economic injustice across New York.

## **Violence Interrupters**

The Community Violence Intervention Act that was adopted as part of the 2021-22 state budget included \$10 million to hospital-based violence intervention programs and community-based violence interruption programs. These programs provide a credible, non-police response to gun violence, and have a remarkable track record of success in the communities most vulnerable to gun violence. The Caucus supports the inclusion of \$100 million in capital funding in the FY 2024-2025 budget towards this goal.

## **Fair Futures**

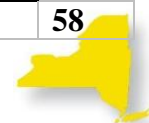
The Caucus supports an increase in the age of eligibility for the Child Welfare Services reimbursement for New York City from age 21 to 26. This would allow New York City to provide more resources to foster youth, using the Fair Futures model, who currently age out of the system and have high rates of poverty and lower career prospects than their peers.

## **Domestic Violence Funding Remodeling**

The Caucus supports the following funding model for Domestic Violence (DV) services: restructuring funding from the per-diem “heads in beds” model to support the needs of single adult survivors of domestic violence, such as trafficking survivors, older adult survivors, LGBTQ+ survivors, and people with pets. and broadening the range of services and options available to them; (2) Integrating funding for residential and non-residential DV services to ensure DV survivors are able to access a variety of services and programs; (3) Establishing and relying on a dedicated state funding stream for DV services to complement existing sources of federal support for victims services; (4) Reducing administrative burdens placed on DV programs; an (5) Enabling DV programs and DV survivors to determine when a survivor is ready to leave emergency shelter; and, (6) Committing to close the gap in funding for crime victims' services caused by a reduction in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding this year and in future years.

## **Economic Empowerment Program (EEP)**

The Caucus supports \$300,000 in operational funding for URI’s Economic Empowerment Program (EEP), which is a domestic violence program.



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## **Prioritizing Aging New Yorkers**

### **Automatic Enrollment for SCRIE**

Currently, several counties in New York State have established Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) programs. These programs help many low to moderate income seniors remain in their apartments by assisting them in paying their yearly rent increase if they are spending more than a third of their monthly income on rent. This is done through providing the renter's landlord with a property tax abatement for the cost of the increase. Programs like SCRIE serve a vital purpose for all seniors who qualify, but many eligible seniors do not know about the program and are unable to reap its benefits, due to lack of outreach. The Caucus requests the inclusion of language authorizing localities and municipalities that have these programs to auto-enroll eligible seniors.

### **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NNORCs) coordinate a broad range of health and social services to help older residents remain in their homes. Preserving and expanding the NORC program across New York State is essential to keeping our aging population healthy, active, and social beyond the medical programs that support seniors in our communities. In 2017, NYSOFA pledged to fund three new NORC programs in an RFP they later withdrew. We cannot allow this to happen again, and we must ensure that NORC programs receive funding in the coming year. We must also introduce ongoing stable funding for this program and other older adult services.

Our state has a rapidly aging population. N/NORC programs afford older adults a sense of independence and familiarity associated with community-based programs that are irreplaceable. N/NORCs are vital to New York's aging population and act as preventative care, keeping our seniors at home and in their communities and helping the state maintain its designation as an age-friendly state. The Caucus supports the continued support for N/NORCs and their services by further investing an additional \$1 million in the budget, for a total of \$9.055 million for the program.

### **Community Services for the Elderly**

The Community Services for the Elderly program provides community-based, supportive services to frail, low-income older adults who need assistance to maintain their independence at home. CSE has effectively been a state block grant that enables localities to determine specific unmet needs and shape the way the delivery system is organized to respond, giving them considerable flexibility within the general parameters of the program's intent and goals. The Caucus advocates for at least \$10 million per year in perpetuity to close the wait list for community services for the elderly (CSE).



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## **Strengthening Social Safety Net**

### **Community & Family Reinvestment Act (CFRA)**

The Community & Family Reinvestment Act (CFRA) is an opportunity to transform child welfare by centering families and fully funding multiple tiers of prevention. Racism, sexism, and classism are woven into the child welfare system in New York, and even though there have been significant and impressive decreases in the number of children in foster care, the rates of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous children in care compared to white children are alarming and must be addressed. The Caucus calls for the implementation of CFRA, which is composed of 4 main components: (1) Restore the child welfare funding statute to 65/35 cost share structure between the state and counties; (2) Create a primary prevention fund, where all allocated resources are used for primary prevention to ensure families do not encounter the child welfare system; (3) Remove the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program from the Foster Care Block Grant and fund it separately at \$25 million; and (4) Increase the child welfare housing voucher from \$300/month to \$725/month to support reunification and independent living.

### **Social and Child Welfare Funding**

The two percent spending cap has had a chilling effect on social welfare agency spending in New York. In the last fiscal year, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the Division of Human Rights (DHR) saw the largest decreases in state operating funds. Since 2011, all agencies have seen significant decreases, but OCFS, DHR, and the Division of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR) have seen the largest decreases at 38%, 51%, and 36%, respectively. Funding reported for social welfare agencies has fluctuated since 2011 with some financing and some accounting changes, but overall funding is decreasing for these agencies. The Caucus supports additional funding to invest in social and child welfare.

### **Families First Transition Fund**

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), signed into law in early 2018, represents a fundamental shift in the national approach to child welfare. Recognizing the importance of family in child development, federal law now emphasizes the importance of both keeping children safely with their families whenever possible and ensuring that children are in family-based care when foster care becomes necessary. In order to ensure that FFPSA implementation is effective, New York State and its counties must be proactive: the state should prepare now by improving policies and practices to recruit, retain, and strengthen foster and kinship families, and evaluate its current use of residential care. The Caucus supports an allocation of \$7.5 million over the next three years to adequately fund this effort.



## **Delivering Social Services for New Yorkers**

The Caucus calls for the reform of the delivery of social services and reinvention of poverty policy in New York State by creating pilot projects to enable low-income people to: (1) simultaneously access multiple government benefits and nonprofit services digitally; (2) save money in a non-taxable account that could be used to pay for future education, job training, first home purchases, or small business start-ups; and (3) integrate the above with free or low-cost banking and/or credit union services.

Public Assistance grant amounts have not been updated in decades and the allowance for rent has not been updated in over 10 years. Both have fallen well below inflation. Data from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development indicates there are no apartments that meet basic housing quality standards in the private rental market available at rents equal to the shelter allowance. The Caucus supports increasing the rent allowance to be in line with HUD's Fair Market Rents to help the lowest-income New Yorkers obtain and retain safe and decent housing, thereby reducing housing instability and homelessness.

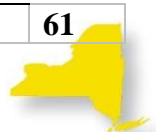
## **Strengthening the Social Workforce**

New York State faces simultaneous social crises, including increased immigration, rising homelessness, and a mental health and overdose crisis, particularly impacting communities of color. Social workers, with 80% serving in these communities, play a crucial role in delivering essential services. To effectively address these challenges, New York needs a large, competent, and diverse social work workforce, as research shows the effectiveness of professionals who understand and reflect the experiences of their clients.

To overcome barriers to expanding the mental health workforce, it's essential to address obstacles preventing diverse social workers from becoming clinicians. Therefore, the Caucus calls on the state to license social workers at the MSW entry level who meet all state requirements for licensure except the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) exam.

## **Legal Representation for Wrongfully Denied/Terminated Federal Disability Benefits**

Signed into state law in 1983, the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) provides legal representation to low-income disabled New Yorkers whose federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSD) benefits have been wrongly denied or terminated. In December 2017, The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that Social Security claimants with legal representatives were nearly three times more likely to be awarded benefits as those without. DAP saves the state millions of dollars in avoided public assistance costs by helping disabled New Yorkers receive federal benefits. To protect our neighbors with disabilities, the Caucus calls for a total of \$6.76 million in state funds (\$5.26 million from Executive, \$1.5 million from Legislature) which, when matched by counties, will provide a total of \$13.52 million that will help disabled New Yorkers obtain needed benefits.



## **Flattening Public Benefits Cliffs**

The Caucus supports measures to help working New Yorkers gradually transition off public benefits rather than face punitive withdrawals as they work to achieve self-sufficiency. The FY 2023-2024 enacted budget included authorization for social services districts to provide a six-month 100% earned income disregard to New Yorkers completing a state or federal job training program and re-entering the workforce. The authorization came with a caveat that disqualifies individuals earning over 200% of the federal poverty level. The six-month 100% earned income disregard is intended to help workers achieve economic security; and disqualifying individuals earning above minimum wage or 200% FPL will provide little assistance to these New Yorkers.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: LABOR

**Medicare Part B Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) Subsidy:** The Executive proposes to cease.

**Anti-Discrimination Investigations Division Funding:** The Executive proposal provides the Office of Employee Relations (OER) approximately \$3.3 million to fund the agency's Affirmative Action Administrator (AAA) staff to meet the demand for discrimination investigations.

**Eliminating the Lag Payroll and Salary Withholding Program for Newly Hired State Employees:** The Executive proposes to eliminate the Lag Payroll and Salary Withholding Program for prospective state employees hired on or after July 1, 2024.

**Civil Services Fee Waiver:** The Executive Budget includes \$2.5 million to continue to waive state civil service application fees for all examinations held after July 1, 2023.







## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET "A Demand for Justice"

### **LABOR & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### Labor



“My name is Sabita and I am an excluded and undocumented. I am a member of Jahajee Sisters, a gender-justice organizations that works to dismantle gender-based violence. I was really counting on the excluded workers fund back in 2021 because I needed that money to support the back-pay of my rent and to help me go to school. I want to study medical coding but because of COVID, I was out of the job and could not pay to go to school. While I received so much support from Jahajee Sisters, I did not get through with the excluded workers fund. This is why a more permanent solution is necessary for excluded workers. I pay taxes and I’ve been in this country for 10 years. As a tax payer, I have the right to receive unemployment for someone who adds to our economy. Everyone who is left out needs to count and accepted as a worker who pays taxes. We don't want to be excluded anymore.” - *Jahajee Member: Sabita*





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET

### **LABOR**

#### **Statewide Youth Employment Program**

The Caucus calls for state investment of \$1 billion in a year-round employment and work readiness program for young New Yorkers aged 16-24. Participants will be able to explore different interests and career pathways, develop productive workplace habits, and engage in learning experiences that strengthen their social, civic, and leadership skills.

#### **Civil Exam Study**

The Caucus supports efforts to direct the department of civil service to conduct a study on competitive examinations for public employment held by the state department of civil service and by municipal commissions to determine whether the contents of such examinations have a discriminatory effect on minority examinees.

#### **Temporary Disability Insurance Program**

The current Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program, stagnant since 1949, lacks crucial employment and healthcare protections, offering inadequate income support with a capped benefit of \$170 per week. The Caucus calls for updating TDI by raising the benefit cap, implementing progressive wage replacement up to 90% of an employee's average weekly wage, and expanding coverage to include all pregnancy outcomes. This urgency is emphasized for women and birthing individuals, with around 30% of health-related benefit claims tied to pregnancy outcomes. By aligning TDI with paid family leave benefits, New York can empower vulnerable communities and ensure New Yorkers don't have to choose between health and financial stability, providing overdue protections against adversity.

#### **Telemedicine for Injured Workers**

Recognizing the challenges faced by injured workers, the Caucus urges the state to grant injured workers the ability to receive necessary treatment through telemedicine, particularly for mental and behavioral health needs resulting from workplace injuries. This initiative ensures equitable access to care for all New Yorkers injured in the workplace, regardless of their location.



## **Clean Slate Support**

Once an individual's "debt to society" is paid, justice demands that the individual not be punished further in connection with employment, housing, obtaining credit, and many additional areas essential for successful participation in one's community. The recently signed Clean Slate Act allows formerly incarcerated individuals to move on with their lives and not be punished in perpetuity. It aims to end perpetual punishment by requiring the concealing of certain records subject to a variety of conditions and exceptions, making it illegal and a violation of Human Rights to unlawfully disseminate any information that has been concealed. For the effective and timely implementation of this law, we are requesting sufficient funds to be allocated to the appropriate agencies. The Caucus will continue to work with the executive and advocate for this critical allocation

## **Unemployment Bridge Program**

After the creation of a first-in-the-nation \$2.1 billion fund that reached more than 131,000 workers excluded from unemployment and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the Legislature and Governor must now ensure permanent inclusion in the unemployment system for all. The Caucus urges the inclusion of this proposal in the enacted budget to establish a permanent unemployment insurance program in New York State that can be accessed by excluded workers who currently contribute to social safety net programs but are excluded from traditional unemployment insurance. \$800 million will create the first ever Unemployment Bridge Program, which will provide up to \$1,200/month in economic support to workers ineligible for unemployment. Prime beneficiaries will be undocumented immigrant workers, cash economy workers, freelancers, and other types of excluded workers. This program can serve up to 50,000 people a month. Additionally, this program can be funded with revenue generated from the implementation of a digital ad tax.

## **Mental Health Support in the Workplace**

The Caucus supports the proposal to instruct the Department of Labor to develop and distribute written materials for employers about mental health services and resources for posting in the workplace. Additionally, the proposal encourages voluntary guidance for employers to implement strategies and programs supporting the mental health and wellness of employees. The guidance is expected to be available in both written and digital formats, catering to English speakers and, where applicable, translated into additional primary languages.

## **Empire State Licensing Act**

The Caucus is advocating for access to professional licensing for New York's undocumented individuals. State and City fees and taxable revenue will provide crucial cash flow to our fiscally struggling governments. Similar bills passed in Nevada and New Jersey provided undocumented immigrants a feasible pathway toward sustainable jobs and careers.



## **Liability for Unpaid Unemployment Insurance**

Under current law, the Department of Labor can hold corporations, sole proprietors, and some partners liable for unpaid UI contributions, but does not have authority to hold officers of such corporations or members of LLCs individually liable. Based on historical patterns, approximately \$35 million per year in unpaid UI contributions is assigned inactive collection status due to the inability to collect from out-of-business corporations, LLCs, and partnerships who abandon their debt. The ability to collect against corporate officers, members or managers of limited liability companies, and certain partners would significantly decrease this amount and have a positive effect on the UI Trust Fund. Extending this liability would serve as a deterrent against unscrupulous employers who evade paying their fair share of UI contributions by closing a business and setting up a new corporation, limited liability company, or partnership.

## **Reclassifying Certain Claimants in the Workers' Compensation Law**

Workers' Compensation boards are currently mandated to provide extreme hardship benefits to recipients whose household incomes are less than 75% of an average weekly wage upon termination of the disability benefits. Extreme hardship can be applied for within a year of workers' compensation recipient's benefits being extinguished. The workers' compensation board currently defines extreme hardship as the inability to meet household bills considering the injured worker's income as well as that of other household members. The Caucus supports efforts that make it easier for a worker to earn extreme hardship by redefining lost wage-earning capacity at 50% instead of 75%. This will be especially helpful to workers who are older who might opt into their social security benefits earlier without a larger worker compensation benefit package.

## **Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations Programming**

- \$5M for Cornell ILR's Climate Jobs Institute
- \$400K for Cornell University Prison Education and Employment Transitions Program
- \$300K for Yang-Tan Institute (YTI) to advance equal workforce opportunities for people with disabilities
- \$500,000 appropriation to the Department of Labor to fund a community enforcement initiative for domestic work
- \$1.4M for New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations
  - \$600,000 for the Worker Institute (WI) at Cornell ILR
  - \$300,000 for the NYS AFL-CIO / Cornell Union Leadership Institute
  - \$500,000 for the Workplace Sexual Harassment / Gender-based Violence Awareness Program





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Redevelopment of Underutilized Sites for Housing (NY-RUSH):** The Executive proposes \$250 million to support the repurposing of property owned by state agencies for use as housing.

**Regional Economic Development Council (REDC):** The Executive proposes \$150 million to support a new round of REDC capital awards, along with \$75 million in new Excelsior tax credits to assist regionally significant economic development projects.

**Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI):** The Executive provides \$100 million for a new round of DRI grant awards.

**NY Forward Program:** The Executive proposes up to \$100 million for a new round of NY Forward grant awards.

**New York CREATES:** The Executive provides \$500 million in capital funding to support the Albany NanoTech Complex's High NA Extreme Ultraviolet Lithography Center.

**Empire Artificial Intelligence (AI):** The Executive proposes \$275 million in capital grants and other funding sources, to be matched by \$125 million in private funding, for an AI computing consortium.

**One Network for Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnerships (ON-RAMP):** The Executive proposes \$200 million in new and existing capital resources to establish regional workforce development centers located along the I-90 Corridor.

**FAST-NY Shovel Ready Grant Program:** The Executive proposes \$100 million in grants to support the preparation and development of prospective construction sites.

**New County Partnership Grants Program:** The Executive proposes \$135 million to support infrastructure projects of local governments outside of New York City.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET

### ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

#### **Black Farmers United of New York State**

Institutional and structural racism have led to inequitable access to agriculture and food – this is resulting in ongoing health conditions and difficulties with quality of life for Black consumers as well as farmers, whose numbers have depleted in New York- leaving only 139 out of over 50,000 New York farmers. The Caucus is calling for a \$30 million allocation to Black Farmers United of New York State.

Continued funding for Black Farmers United NYS and for the Urban Farming and Community Garden Grant Program will assist farms and food businesses owned by people of color and create pathways to ownership for NYS Black farmers through education, policy development, and mutual aid.

#### **Farm to School Reimbursement Incentive Program**

The Caucus supports increased funding for the Farm to School Reimbursement Incentive program which incentivizes schools that spend at least 30% of total meal costs on New York foods served at school meals and expanding the program to include reimbursement for breakfast (in addition to lunch) will help to support New York farmers, generate nearly an additional half of a billion dollars in economic impact, and increase access to healthy food for students.

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#### ***Supporting Small Businesses***

##### **Small Business and Nonprofit Rent Relief and Support**

For many small businesses and nonprofits, rent payments, even in a favorable economic climate, present a burden. During the unprecedented economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these tenants are suffering because of state mandates, forcing them to close and/or curtail their operations. The Caucus supports tax credits to local and small businesses and a federal and state legal services program to support small businesses and nonprofits.



## **MWBE Center**

To support MWBE owners navigating certification processes, procurement, and growth, the Caucus calls for the creation of a downstate MWBE Center that will bring in-person services closer to home for thousands of businesses. In addition to reducing barriers to certification, the Center will improve access to Empire State Development's Division of Minority and Women's Business Development (DMWBD) services and other resources. This will ensure the state continues to improve on its MWBE utilization goals and allows for a better lens to effectively diversify its procurement partners. Funding of the MWBE Center will create a one-stop-shop, with resources on existing federal, state, and local programs under one roof, like the newly passed MWBE reciprocity between the state and New York City.

## **Small Business Security Fund**

The Small Business Security Grant will provide funding support for physical security enhancements and activities to small businesses, including bodegas and grocery stores, at a high risk for crime. The program also intends to integrate business and agency preparedness activities, and to promote coordination and collaboration amongst businesses and agencies in emergencies. The Caucus supports establishing a Small Business Security Grant Fund to assist small businesses, including critical bodegas and grocery stores, in meeting security needs.

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## **Culture & Arts**

### **BIPOC Artist Funding**

New York's working artists and performers are uniquely vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially true for artists of color, who are underpaid and often expected to build their career on the promise of exposure instead of remuneration. These recent hardships, combined with structural and economic inequality, prevent artists of color from contributing their talents to our communities. The Caucus recommends additional investment to the New York Council of the Arts for a new grant program focused on commissioning BIPOC artists and institutions across the state for public art projects.

Additionally, \$50,000 would be allocated for the National Black Theatre Inc.

### **New York 250 Commission**

The Caucus emphasizes the urgent need for New York to establish and fund a commission in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. While several states have active commissions, New York remains without one. The Caucus calls for funding to enable museums, historical societies, historic sites, and battlefields to share their cultural resources. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating the stories of Indigenous Nations, BIPOC communities, and new Americans.



## **Expanding Public Access to Institutions of Culture and Arts**

New York City boasts some of the globe's most prominent museums, zoos, performing arts centers, botanical gardens and more, courtesy of an extraordinary public-private partnership established in the mid-19th century. This unique collaboration offers complimentary access and instruction to New Yorkers in return for spaces in structures constructed on City-owned parkland. Presently, 17 institutions reap the advantages of this partnership, securing over \$1 billion in annual funding. The Caucus strongly encourages Empire State Development, in coordination with various departments and offices, to initiate a study focused on enhancing public access to these various institutions across New York State.

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## **New York State Public Bank**

This proposal would establish a State of New York Public Bank to use public funds for the public good and increase access to credit and capital in underbanked and/or economically disadvantaged communities. A public bank is a financial institution created by the state for a "public benefit" of the community. The Bank of North Dakota, founded in 1919, is currently the only public bank that exists in the United States. Since 2010, 28 states have passed legislation to establish a public banking taskforce or to create a public bank in their state. The State of California enacted a law in 2019 allowing municipalities to form a public bank.

The Caucus advocates for a New York Public Bank for the purpose of achieving cost savings, strengthening local economies, supporting community economic development, and addressing infrastructure and housing needs for localities.

## **New York Public Banking Act**

The Caucus advocates for the creation of a safe and appropriate regulatory framework for municipalities seeking to establish public banks. This would allow the Department of Financial Services (DFS) to issue special-purpose public bank charters. A public bank is a financial institution created by a city, county, town, or village for a "public benefit" of the community. The public bank could exist in communities that have little to no access to banking services. The public bank could fund local projects at a reduced cost, generate profits for local governments, and create low-cost credit/loans to small businesses, MWBEs and/or student loans to low-income families.







## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### EXECUTIVE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: PUBLIC PROTECTION

**Organized Retail Theft Prevention:** The Executive provides \$40.2 million for retail theft prevention: \$25.2 million in new funding to deploy a dedicated State Police team to build cases against organized retail theft rings and create a new State Police enforcement unit; \$10 million in funding for District Attorneys to prosecute property crime cases; and \$5 million in additional funding to build the capacity of local law enforcement efforts to combat retail theft.

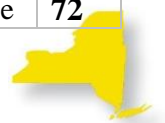
**Domestic Violence Prevention and Prosecution:** The Executive includes \$40.8 million to reduce assaults with a focus on domestic violence outside the City of New York. This is comprised of \$35.8 million for district attorneys to expand the domestic Violence STAT Model and the continuation of a \$5 million grant program to victims of domestic violence utilized to cover expenses in emergency situations.

**Civil Legal Services Grants Increase:** The Executive proposes to transfer \$10 million in funding from the Interest on Lawyer Account (IOLA) to non-profits that provide civil legal services to lower income New Yorkers.

**Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes (SCAHC):** The Executive Budget provides an additional \$10 million for the next round of the SCAHC program, for total funding of \$35 million.

**Prison Closures:** The Executive includes a proposal to effectuate the closure of five correctional facilities with 90-day notice prior to closure.

**Emergency Preparedness:** The Executive provides \$15 million in funding to supply local and county governments with additional generators, high-flow pumps, flood barrier technology, and other equipment used in response to flooding and other weather emergencies. Additionally, the Executive provides \$10.4 million in funding to the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Emergency Management to increase the state's regional presence, to increase local planning and training, to provide additional tabletop exercises, and to improve analytic and geospatial capabilities.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET *"A Demand for Justice"*

### **CIVIL RIGHTS & CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



Hi my name is Lawrence from Yonkers, New York. A former NYU student and I recently just got married. During my incarceration I learned that I was dealing with anxiety. I didn't know what it was and I thought it was just an excuse that people used. I know that here are different stages of anxiety and I am now realizing that I have been dealing with anxiety my whole life. Growing up in crime and poverty it become a norm for us, but I always thought that this was just the way that we lived. Something that we all had to deal with and could not change. I know that for me that I am currently seeking medical treatment with a psychiatrist to help me deal with some of my pass problems. If I had help from the start, I would not have made many of the poor decision that I have made. Treatment over jail is very important because there is a bigger problem here that just incarcerating folks cannot solve. Mental health is a serious issue especially in urban community. for us to be educated and have access to services will lead to better outcomes. – *Lawrence P., Yonkers resident.*





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET

### *"A Demand for Justice"*

#### Civil Rights

##### **Reparations**

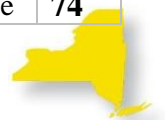
The New York City Comptroller released a groundbreaking report that exposes alarming racial wealth disparities in New York State and City, examining the historical legacies of slavery and institutional racism. Released on the 13th Amendment's anniversary, the report highlights a staggering racial wealth gap in the state. White households, with a median income of \$276,900, surpass Black households by almost 15 times (\$18,870). Educational disparities persist, with white New Yorkers having over three times the net worth of Black New Yorkers with a bachelor's degree. Homeownership, a key wealth-building avenue, remains challenging for Black families, with only 24% owning homes compared to 63% of white residents. The Caucus emphasizes the urgency of addressing these disparities, recognizing their profound societal consequences. The membership continues to support the mission of the New York State Reparations Commission.

##### **Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements**

Historically, racial disparities persist in New York's correctional system, despite efforts to reduce the overall prison population through alternative programs. The enactment of race-neutral legislation can unintentionally harm minority populations. To address this, the Caucus advocates for the inclusion of racial impact statements in the legislative and rule-making process, aiming to prevent disproportionate impacts on communities of color. This model would require all bills, amendments, and rules to be accompanied by a racial impact statement, promoting transparency and equity in policymaking.

##### **Expand Funding for Parental Representation Cases**

The Caucus advocates for New York State to invest \$28 million in parental representation. Despite decades of research, hearings and reports describing the crisis in family court representation, New York has failed to protect families. The Caucus calls on the state to act now by assuring parents facing these racially disparate and harsh systems have an attorney and other resources to protect their families from unwarranted separation and prevent unnecessary removal of children from their families and cultures.



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## **Uplifting New Americans**

### **Access to Representation Act**

The Caucus supports \$100 million in funding for the Access to Representation Act, which ensures a right to counsel for all immigrants facing deportation in New York and provides stable funding for immigration legal services. No individual in our country should have to defend themselves against trained attorneys without proper counsel to protect themselves, and their families, against deportation.

### **Immigration Services Funding**

In support of the Office for New Americans the Caucus calls for a total of \$150 million in operating funds. Additionally, the Caucus supports the allocation of \$15.3 million, from its current \$10 million for immigration legal services and \$9.1 million to the Office for New Americans to ensure New Yorkers who face complex immigration issues have access to proper legal help and support.

### **New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)**

Since 2017, NYIFUP has ensured legal representation for detained individuals facing deportation in New York, making it the first state to provide such a guarantee. Unlike criminal cases, those facing deportation lack a public defender, making NYIFUP crucial. Nationwide, 81% of detained individuals navigate immigration court alone. NYIFUP's impact is evident, with represented immigrants being 3.5 times more likely to be released and 10 times more likely to prove their right to stay. To maintain this critical service, the Caucus supports a budgetary allocation of \$6.5 million.

### **Alex R. Jimenez New York State Military Immigrant Family Legacy Program**

Those in the armed forces demonstrate patriotism and perseverance for democratic values that enhance our communities. The Caucus supports an efficient program to expedite the naturalization process for veterans and current service members, ensuring proper acknowledgment for their contributions. This initiative covers all veterans, irrespective of sexual orientation or immigration status.

### **Expand Language Access**

The Caucus supports \$10 million in the 2024-2025 New York State Executive Budget for Language Access Expansion. This would improve access to language services for immigrant communities located outside of New York City and support the provisions of the bill. Of the amount requested, \$5 million would fund the development of learning language services cooperatives; \$3 million would increase the base funding for the New York State Office of Language Access; and \$2 million would fund the training of community interpreters, the assessment of regional language needs, and the retention of interpreters.



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## **Safeguarding Voting Rights=**

### **Same Day Voter Registration**

The Caucus supports legislation which would authorize individuals qualified to register to vote, and who have missed the deadlines for voter registration prior to an election, to complete a conditional voter registration and cast an affidavit ballot which would then be canvassed when such registration was deemed eligible and valid by the board of elections. This would give thousands of individuals who would otherwise be ineligible to vote on election day, or during early voting, the opportunity to vote.

### **Enfranchisement**

Under current New York law, individuals who are on parole are prohibited from voting. There are about 30,000 people on parole at any given time in New York; and both here and across the country, the criminal disenfranchisement laws disproportionately impact people of color. Nearly three-quarters of New Yorkers on parole are Black or Latino. One out of every 24 Black voters in New York is disenfranchised; and this policy is firmly rooted in historical racism, dating back to a 19th century statute.

Additionally, New York law does allow individuals on probation to vote. There is no reason for this distinction between probation and parole. This distinction has caused widespread confusion among formerly incarcerated people and elected officials, leading to de facto disenfranchisement when individuals who are permitted to vote think that they are not.

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### **Lorena Borjas Trans Wellness and Equity Fund**

To sustain funding for the initiative, the Caucus is calling for an allocation \$2 million from the state to continue this first in the nation program and serve community-based non-profits.





## 2024 PEOPLE'S BUDGET

### ***CRIMINAL JUSTICE***

#### **Protecting Discovery Reforms**

The Caucus adheres to holding the line on discovery reforms and will not support changes to CPL article 245 (Discovery). Additionally, the Caucus calls for continued increased funding for defender discovery, which is essential for successful discovery implementation.

#### **Parole Reform**

Reentry reform must address how people accused of violating parole are adjudicated. The fact remains that people accused of violating conditions of their parole are contributing to mass incarceration in New York prisons and local jails. Many people under parole supervision in New York are returned to prison, and most of those people are re-incarcerated on technical violations, not rearrests. People accused of violating parole are the only population seeing a growth in numbers in New York City jails.

New York State has a crisis of aging and dying behind bars because of extreme sentences and blanket, racially biased denials of parole release. In New York prisons, 15% of people are age 55 or older, and this number is rapidly growing. Without reforms to expand access to parole release and make the process more fair in New York State, New Yorkers, especially those who are Black and Latino, will continue to age without dignity, get sick, and die in prison regardless of their transformation and potential benefits to the outside community. If New York State's prison system were a country, a life expectancy of 57 would rank it among the bottom 10 in the world.

True reentry reform must include shortening parole terms overall, incentivizing good behavior by allowing people to earn accelerated discharge, creating a high legal threshold for jailing people on parole for minor offenses and expediting their hearings, and not jailing people for technical violations. For this reason, the Caucus supports the Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole measures, which would require the Board of Parole to release people to community supervision when their period of incarceration has finished unless they pose a clear threat to public safety. Moreover, the Caucus supports eliminating the \$30 parole fee parolees are required to pay once a month.



## **End Predatory Court Fees**

Fees (or surcharges) are extra costs that the government attaches to every conviction — even traffic tickets and minor infractions. They can total hundreds of dollars (not including the amount of any fine imposed). Individuals are often required to pay fees on top of a fine, or in many cases, even when the judge decides not to impose a fine at all. These court fees are explicitly intended as revenue raisers; they function as a form of regressive taxation on New Yorkers that are often the least able to afford them. New Yorkers deserve to live without fear of lifelong debt and poverty and deserve a fair, transparent government. The Caucus is calling for an end to New York’s predatory court fees.

## **Treatment Not Jails**

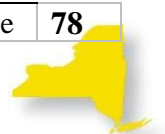
New York must finally begin to address the root causes of criminal legal system involvement. The Treatment Not Jail Act will level the field of judicial diversion and create steps toward ending the criminalization of mental health challenges and functional impairments in New York. Treatment Not Jail will create parity in the system for all vulnerable populations who need support and opportunity, and promote public safety by opening avenues of appropriate, individualized treatment where there are now only pathways to incarceration. New York’s treatment courts currently receive a budget of between \$15,000,000 - \$16,000,000 per year. Thus, the Caucus supports an additional budget allocation of \$16,000,000 to help accommodate the training and bureaucratic adjustment required to implement this initiative, as well as the expected influx of new eligible participants. While this effort comes with an up-front cost, there will be significant cost-savings in the long run, since treatment courts are widely recognized as a highly cost-effective approach to public safety. According to the Office of Court Administration, for every \$1 invested in treatment courts, the state produces \$2.21 in benefits. This savings is especially urgent in New York City, where taxpayers spend over \$556,000 per year for the incarceration of a single individual.

## **Support for Public Defenders**

The Caucus advocates for New York State Defenders Association (NYSDA) to provide comprehensive legal support to all public defense lawyers who represent low-income people in the state’s criminal and family court systems. The Backup Center serves approximately 6,000 attorneys in more than 130 county-based programs.

## **Increase Transparency in State Correctional Facilities**

The Correctional Association of New York (CANY) has played a pivotal role since its establishment in 1846, granted authority by the Legislature to visit prisons and shed light on conditions of confinement for the Legislature and the public. In 2021, crucial advancements were made to enhance CANY’s monitoring capabilities through legislation that solidified its authority to visit, access, inspect, and report on state prisons. To fortify CANY’s critical mission, the Caucus strongly advocates for the allocation of \$500,000.



## **Increasing Prisoner Wages and Providing Free Services**

While some inmates receive financial support from families, many rely on earnings from prison work. These funds contribute to restitution, court fees, and personal needs. Recognizing the incentive provided by wages, the Caucus advocates for raising the base wage for inmates to \$1.20 - \$10 a day, with biannual raises for good performance. Those not participating in work or programs due to age or frailty should receive \$1.00 per day, adjusted every 5 years for the cost of living. Additionally, the Caucus supports enabling incarcerated individuals to send up to 10 free electronic mail letters a day, promoting affordable communication with their families.

## **Wrongful Conviction Reform (440)**

New York State ranks third in the nation in numbers of wrongful convictions. Our state also has an extremely high rate of plea bargaining- 98% of felony cases in our state resolve by plea agreements, not trial. Yet people who plead guilty have the lowest rates of exonerations because there are so many structural barriers to exoneration after a guilty plea, even when those pleas are falsely made under coercion and duress. The Caucus supports efforts to amend Article 440 of the Criminal Procedure Law, which governs post-judgment motions, to provide people previously convicted of crimes the opportunity for meaningful review to ensure redress for wrongful convictions, including in cases where the person pled guilty. Additionally, we are calling for at least \$10 million in state funds to help the judicial system handle any influx of new applications for relief.

## **Prisoners' Legal Services**

Since 1976, Prisoners' Legal Services (PLS) has played a vital role in making New York prisons safer and more humane. Their work has resulted in positive changes in prisoners' attitudes and behavior and has promoted constructive policy and programmatic modifications within DOCCS. PLS' work has also benefited the state Attorney General's Office and state and federal court judges by providing professional legal representation. The Caucus recommends that PLS be allocated a combined \$4 million from the legislature in the SFY 2022-23 budget.

## **Office of Re-entry Services**

The Caucus Supports the creation of a central Office of Re-entry Services to be established within the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). This would provide the foundation to establish an office which would oversee and facilitate the creation of programs and resource-sharing that improve re-entry success and reduce likelihood of recidivism. The 25,000 incarcerated persons released in New York each year need to earn a living, legally. Currently, 2 out of 5 people to be released from state prison return to New York City pre-destined to be homeless. Studies show that re-entry programs, including substance abuse and mental health treatment, improve reintegration numbers markedly. Establishing a comprehensive re-entry program for incarcerated people, run by DCJS, and beginning during incarceration, is a necessary step toward a criminal justice system that keeps all New Yorkers safe.

