



Assemblymember
Kevin A. Cahill
Assembly District 103



May-June
2017

Dear Friends and Constituents,

The Assembly recently completed work on the passage of the 2017-18 State Budget. The spending plan closes a two billion dollar budget gap and represents a commitment by New York State to responsibly fund public education, preserve accessible healthcare options and give much-needed financial support to local economic engines, such as Belleayre Mountain in the Catskills.

While there are areas where more could be done, this spending package will serve the diverse needs of New Yorkers and the residents of our community. Some highlights are included below, but as usual you can check out more details on my [website](#) or by following my [Facebook](#).

Local Successes

On a local level, several projects and groups will benefit directly from the agreement that has been reached on the 2017-2018 New York State Budget.



This marks the fifth year that I led the charge in the Assembly to assure that **Belleayre** and the community receives their fair share of resources allocated to the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA). The Department of Environmental Conservation transferred control of Belleayre Ski Center to ORDA in 2012.

I worked alongside Senator Seward and other representatives from the Hudson Valley to secure \$8.5 million for the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.



The **YouthBuild** organization, for example, received an appropriation of \$300,000 to continue offering their important programs and services in Ulster County and across the State to assist unemployed young adults and give them a second chance at completing their education.

I also championed \$1 million in funding for ABCD, the **Agri-Business Child Development Centers** in Kingston, New Paltz and throughout New York. These amazing folks provide quality, affordable day care and early learning opportunities for the children of new immigrants involved in farm labor and other agricultural pursuits. The educational facility on Route 32 in New Paltz has a long and admirable history.

Over the last several years it has been joined by the amazing site on Adams Street in Kingston that reclaimed an abandoned elementary school. It is part of a true neighborhood center that also houses a community gym and local food pantry. While like New Paltz, the educational program is for the young children of new immigrants, the gym and food pantry serve our entire community.

I joined my colleagues in fighting for a budget that provides funding for a variety of public health priorities, including \$1 million for **Community Health Advocates**, a coalition of organizations and small businesses that help New Yorkers understand their health insurance and then find much-needed health care services.

To ensure that low-income families, veterans and agricultural workers have access to legal representation and important community based services, we allocated:

- \$226,667 to **Legal Services of the Hudson Valley**,
- \$36,119 to the **Worker's Justice Law Center of New York** and
- \$2.6 million to the **New York State Defender's Association**.

This agreement shows the Legislature's commitment to making sure that the justice system serves all New Yorkers.

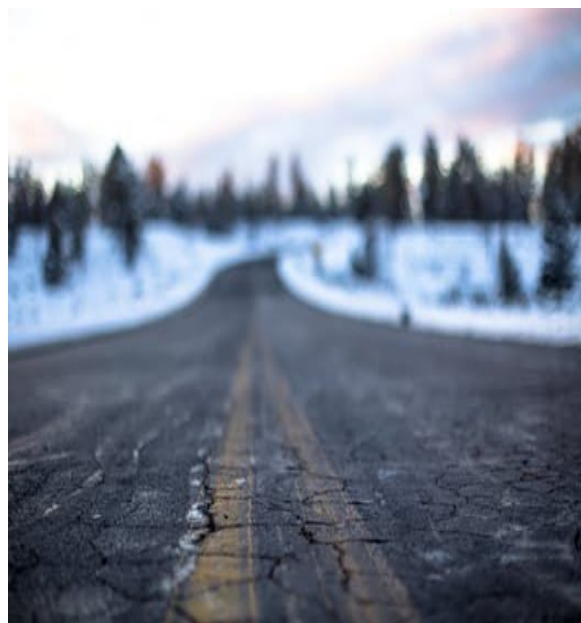


I led the call for the creation of tax credits and increased funding of \$320 million for the **Life Sciences Initiative**. This program moves research findings into a Statewide network of clinical trials to treat multiple sclerosis, strokes, Alzheimer's Disease and traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. The miraculous **Spinal Cord Injury Research Program** and related innovative care and research projects got a monumental boost from this record funding.

I also successfully advocated for a \$505,000 allotment for the **Public Utility Law Project**. While we still struggle to restore better consumer representation at Public Service Commission proceedings, this will provide valuable support for a not for profit organization that assists consumers when dealing with their utility company. Additionally, a funded PULP helps local groups such as **Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson** and **Citizens for Local Power** to amplify the voice of ratepayers and fight for clean, fair and affordable energy policies and practices.

The State Budget also provides for critical **capital investments** including:

- \$130 million for improvements to our aging roads and bridges and \$65 million for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program;
- \$5 million capital fund to assist animal shelters, many of which are overcrowded, dependent on volunteers and struggling financially.
- \$5 million for capital improvements to local fairgrounds, which have played an important part in connecting communities, boosting local economies and helping showcase local farmers and small businesses.
- \$10 million in transit system operating assistance. Ulster County Area Transit and the City of Kingston bus system would eligible for such funding.



Drinking Water

In a clear show of commitment to **clean drinking water**, the State Budget included funding for improvements for our local water systems. Most of us are deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis faced by New York's communities like Hoosick Falls, Newburgh and elsewhere. After witnessing what has happened in our State and elsewhere, like Flint, Michigan, we must be proactive to secure our drinking water supply and make sure our infrastructure meets 21st Century standards.



The Legislature agreed to fund a \$2.5 billion water infrastructure program. This will address many of the concerns raised across New York about water contamination. Funds will be available for repairs to systems that deliver drinking water and treat waste water. The initiative prioritizes helping our local towns and villages by including \$150 million for inter-municipal projects. Another \$100 million is set aside for public needs that would have trouble qualifying for State support or may require funds to complete a specific project.

Making Taxes Fair for Middle Income Earners



This year's budget agreement includes an enhanced middle-income **childcare tax credit** to help families make those expenses more affordable. The new relief will supplement the existing New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. While the low income credit is completely protected, the total incentive will increase from \$169 to \$376 for families earning between \$60,000 and \$150,000, per household, on average.

Many New Yorkers will also see **lower State Income Taxes** in the coming year from reduced rates. Dropping to 5.5 percent and 6 percent, respectively, when the cuts are fully phased in for people who fit into the \$40,000-\$150,000 income bracket and to 6.65 percent for those earning between \$150,000-\$300,000, the new structure is at a near record low. These new brackets will save New Yorkers nearly \$6.6 billion in just the first four years, with annual savings reaching \$4.2 billion by 2025. This adjustment was made possible in part by continuing the progressive rates on multi-millionaires that were otherwise set to expire.

I continue to advocate for *more* progressivity of marginal income tax rates for multi-millionaires. If it had been approved, we could have seen increased school aid, decreased property taxes and even lower State income tax rates for many. Unfortunately, Governor Cuomo and the New York State Senate would not agree. We could have done better with their support; still, the final tax package continues efforts to make State taxes fairer for the working families of New York.

Education Wins

Public Education

I met with a wide range of stakeholders leading up to the budget agreement including parents, teachers, superintendents and principals. Hearing diverse viewpoints helped me understand each District's unique budgetary needs. The result is that together we worked to make sure our schools received their fair share.



Local schools in Ulster and Dutchess Counties will receive over \$528,000,000 in State aid for the coming fiscal year. BOCES will receive \$16,927,879 and \$14,304,597 in Dutchess and Ulster, respectively.

The Legislature's agreement prioritizes public education by investing \$25.7 billion in school aid to help children reach their full potential, an overall increase of \$1 billion.

The final Budget also restores and preserves the Foundation Aid formula previously cut by Governor Cuomo. This alone will grow State assistance by \$700 million.

Libraries

Public libraries are essential neighborhood assets, offering everything from books and educational materials to technology and job search tools and local community programs to all.

The Legislature restored aid to public libraries by \$9 million to ensure they can continue to provide services and resources to residents, for a total of \$95.6 million. In addition, the Budget provides an increase of \$10 million in capital funding.

This critical funding will ensure that our libraries are equipped to meet the needs of our diverse communities.



STEM Learning for Grades K through 12

The inclusion of \$1.2 million for regional community schools technical centers in the Budget signals the importance we attach to training our future leaders in the sciences and technology fields.

In addition, the Budget provides \$25 million for technology that public schools would lend to non-public school students and \$5 million grant program to hire STEM teachers in nonpublic schools.

Higher Education Technology Initiative

The State University of New York system received \$6.5 million for Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) labs, a restoration of \$2 million.

The Science and Technology Entry Program prepares historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged elementary and secondary school students and received \$15.8 million.

The Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program aims to increase the number of students from under-represented groups who are pursuing professional licensure and careers in mathematics, science, technology and health-related fields and was funded at \$11.9 million.



College Success

The Budget requires the Higher Education Services Corporation to complete a **college affordability study** examining student loan debt relief and student loan refinancing options as well as affordability initiatives to help find ways to reduce the cost of student textbooks, transportation and housing. The Budget assists full-time students, part-time students, those needing remedial assistance and those needing child care while attending as follows:

- \$9.3 million to **Community Colleges** - an overall increase in funding aid of \$50 per full-time equivalent student;
- \$3.1 million for a new **scholarship** program for **part-time** students attending community colleges so students with family or other responsibilities can finish school on their own schedules;
- \$1.5 million for SUNY GAP to help provide **remediation** to community college students;
- \$1.1 million in funding restored to SUNY **child care centers**.

In addition, the final State Budget funds a host of important and innovative SUNY-led programs, including \$87.9 million for SUNY **Health Science Centers** to help support top-notch teaching hospitals across the State and \$60 million for **Educational Opportunity Centers**.

A new program expands the opportunity to get a quality college education for middle income New Yorkers. The Legislature agreed to a plan for worthy and qualified students attending a State or City college or university and whose families earn less than \$100,000 to attend **tuition free**. Income levels will increase to \$125,000 by 2019. While a completely tuition free college education would lift the entire State even more, this is an important first step.

Private higher education students were not forgotten either, with an additional \$25 million to be available in the **Tuition Assistance Plan** specifically for students who attend non-public colleges. The agreement also includes \$8 million to cover the cost of students' textbooks.



Raise the Age

New York finally joins 48 other states in our nation by assuring that our criminal justice system treats children as children and adults as adults. "Raise the Age" increases the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years old.

Study after study has proven that treating children who get in trouble as adults virtually guarantees a life lost to crime. Now they and society will have a second chance.



I heard comments from local government and law enforcement officials who expressed disagreement over some earlier iterations of the proposal.

Others lent their support for the concept. I shared those views with my colleagues during tough negotiations.

Under the new law, youth who commit non-violent crimes will receive the intervention and evidence-based treatment they need. There will also be a prohibition against housing young people in adult facilities or jails.

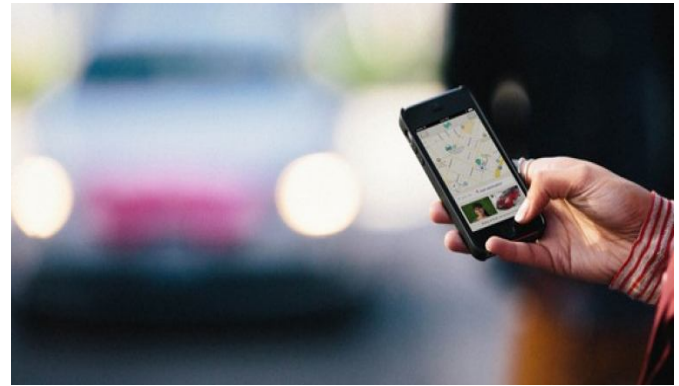
Instead, young offenders will be placed in specialized juvenile detention facilities certified by the New York City Administration for Children's Services and the State's Office of Children and Family Services and in conjunction with the State's Commission of Correction and the New York City Department of Corrections.

While the final agreement reflects much of what was conveyed, some concerns remain. I joined colleagues in insisting that there be an ongoing task force to study ways to improve the approach and to assess and possibly revisit potential local impacts, fiscal and otherwise.

Ride-Hailing

The public has been heard and they want electronic ride-hailing. I am happy to announce the terms of the agreement that will bring these app-based services to Upstate New York and Long Island.

The 2017-2018 State Budget will allow Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) to operate throughout New York State under new rules tailored for this emerging industry. During the past two legislative sessions, I authored bills in the Assembly that would permit ride-hailing services outside of New York City. The agreed-to package reflects much of what the Assembly and I originally proposed.



Under the agreement, a TNC would be required to obtain a license from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) after providing proof of insurance. TNC drivers will be required to pass criminal background checks before being issued a permit to operate by a TNC. Each TNC must also adhere to a "Zero-Tolerance Policy" regarding drivers' drug or alcohol use.

While the law is to take effect 90 days after passage, I am currently offering an amendment, A7624, to accelerate the authorization for companies so they can, if they choose, begin service before the Independence Day holiday weekend. An additional amendment to the legislation on ride-hailing states that no one who is a registered sex offender will be able to obtain a permit to drive for a TNC.

Looking Forward ...

With our focus on the 2017-2018 Budget concluded, I am confident that New York State is now in a fiscally sound place and prepared to deal with whatever challenges may come down from the Federal level. This was a particularly difficult budget cycle, but I am excited to move on so the Legislature can get back to work on the many issues we continue to face, including dealing with threats to New York's health care system from Federal changes to building our local economy and infrastructure while protecting our fragile environment.



Finally, be on the lookout for more information from us on the 2017 **Summer Reading and Exercise Program**, a fun and valuable experience for youngsters. Brochures will be going out through local schools and libraries. [Email us](#) directly if you are interested.

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