

Assemblyman
JEFFRION L. AUBRY
 Reports to the People

35TH A.D. • QUEENS COUNTY
 SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINAL NEW YORK STATE BUDGET SFY 2014-15

Dear Neighbor:

Spring has finally arrived and with it the fourth on-time State Budget. All budgets are the product of compromise and the final document is the result of the give and take that is required to ensure the best budget deal possible. However, throughout the negotiations leading to this final agreement, the Assembly has fought to put working families first and addressed the myriad of challenges facing New York residents today.

This year's budget reflects a strong commitment to the education of our children by substantially increasing Education funding this year by \$1.1 billion. The state budget commits \$300 million per year for two years to fund universal, full-day pre-K in New York City. Approved community-based organizations, public schools, charters, and non-public schools will be eligible to receive funding to create pre-K programs. Additionally, in an effort to address Charter school co-location issues, a much-needed compromise was reached. This year's budget also includes a much-needed increase in TAP, community college base-aid, and higher education opportunity programs—all historic Assembly initiatives and priorities. Additionally, we have taken steps to safeguard and strengthen this investment by halting the implementation of Common Core.

My colleagues and I have worked tirelessly during this year's budget negotiations to ensure that the final budget included initiatives that would benefit all New Yorkers. In keeping our promise to working families, we have provided them with \$1.5 billion in tax relief; we have allocated funds to spur job creation in every region of the state, opportunities I am hopeful will reach many unemployed New Yorkers. We were able to alleviate the child care crisis by providing increased funding for additional subsidized child care slots, and to honor our long-standing obligation to provide affordable housing, the budget restores millions in funding to New York State housing programs. Finally, the budget reflects the Assembly's vigilance in protecting the public health, improving our state's health care system, and caring for our most vulnerable citizens.

I hope that you find this newsletter informative. Thank you for your continued support and I encourage you to stop in to raise any important questions and voice your concerns. As always, it is a privilege to represent you, the residents of the 35th Assembly District.

Sincerely,

Jeffrion L. Aubry
 Member of Assembly
 35th A.D., Queens County

THE ASSEMBLY MAKES HISTORIC \$1.1 BILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

As longtime supporters of education, the Assembly majority understands that every child in New York deserves to benefit from a great education, the community is only as strong as its schools, this is why this year's state budget increases school aid by \$1.1 billion, or 5.4 percent, which is \$551 million over the executive budget proposal (A.8556-D). The increase includes \$251 million in additional funding for Foundation Aid and \$602 million in restorations to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), helping to reduce the negative financial impact on schools statewide.

With an increase in school aid of more than 5 percent, significant funding for statewide full-day Universal Pre-K and a bond act proposal to modernize classroom technologies, this year's state budget represents New York's largest investment in our children's future in recent memory.

Increased Education Funding For NYC Schools

The state budget allocates more than \$8.6 billion to New York City schools, an increase of over \$435 million more than last year and more than \$203.2 million over the executive budget proposal. The budget also dedicates \$300 million per year for two years for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in New York City (A.8556-D).

Reforming Common Core

There is no question that the rollout of Common Core has been flawed. As the Assembly continues to work on addressing each area of concern, the state budget takes immediate action that will reduce stress and anxiety for students, parents, and educators, eliminate unnecessary testing and protect student privacy. The budget incorporates recent legislation passed by the Assembly that helps fix the flawed implementation of Common Core. It protects students from unfair consequences based on test results and ensures the security of sensitive student data. The reforms also:

- Ban standardized tests for students in grades K-2;
- Prohibit Common Core test scores from solely or primarily determining grade promotion;
- Delay the use of test results from becoming part of the permanent record for students in grades 3-8;
- Make changes to assessments for students with disabilities and English language learners pursuant to a federal waiver submitted by the State Education Department (SED);
- Significantly limit the amount of classroom time used for test preparation and assessments;

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Reforming Common Core (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

- Direct SED to provide tools, resources, and materials to assist teachers in professional development related to the new standards;
- Place restrictions on the sharing of student data and requiring SED to appoint a chief privacy officer who will serve a three-year term;
- Require the student privacy officer to set guidelines for sharing student data and develop policies to deal with any data breaches;
- Require third-party vendors to notify the school or SED of any data breaches and establishing penalties for failing to do so;
- Create a “Parents Bill of Rights” that places limitations on sharing student data with third-party vendors;
- Provide for the elimination of inBloom and require SED to request that all student information already provided to inBloom be deleted; and
- Allow schools to opt out of sharing private student information with similar entities and certain privately run data dashboards.

Making College Education More Affordable

The key to a bright and successful future is a college education. Making higher education accessible to everyone has always been one of my top priorities and that is why I’m disappointed an agreement couldn’t be reached on the DREAM Act. While this year’s final budget helps make that goal more attainable for some, I will continue to work to ensure it is attainable for all.

This year’s budget provides \$10.4 billion for SUNY and \$4.3 billion for CUNY, and an additional \$20.2 million for community colleges, increasing base aid to SUNY and CUNY community colleges by \$75 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, bringing the total to \$2,497 per FTE. This is the third consecutive budget increase in community college funding.

Boosting TAP, Other College Opportunity Programs

To help students afford the rising cost of college, the budget increases funding for TAP for the first time in 14 years. The maximum TAP award will be increased by \$165 for a maximum award of \$5,165 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student.

The budget also provides \$102 million in funding for college opportunity programs, an increase of \$4.2 million over the executive proposal. The funding restores cuts and provides a 3 percent increase for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program, and the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP).

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES AND MWBE’S

MWBEs and other small businesses are the drivers of our state’s economy and removing barriers for small businesses allows them to participate in the rebuilding of our economy. The budget includes \$1 million to support the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Development Lending Program, a \$365,000 increase from the executive budget proposal. A new MWBE Investment Fund is also included within the lending program. The fund would provide critical financial support to foster the development of new and emerging ideas and promote the long-term financial performance and success of early-stage MWBEs.

SUPPORTING FAMILY PLANNING

The budget takes into account the challenges parents face as they make decisions regarding their families. Specifically, the plan provides an additional \$1 million for infertility services, as well as \$750,000 for family planning services. The budget also provides \$3.9 million to support the payment for Early Intervention Services, which are critical in helping infants and toddlers with developmental delays that can be remedied early on with appropriate care.



STRENGTHENING NEW YORK'S CHILD CARE SYSTEM

It has become increasingly difficult for working families to find affordable and reliable child care. This year's budget provides funding to increase access to quality, affordable child care. The provisions include:

- \$34 million for more than 4,500 additional subsidized child care slots;
- Disregarding the earned income of teenagers under 18 in the household for the purpose of determining a family's child care subsidy eligibility; and
- Requiring child care providers to post their most recent inspection report in a prominent place.

INVESTING IN VITAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

One of my top priorities is ensuring each New Yorker has the health care they need and deserve. To ensure proper health care is available for our most vulnerable populations, the budget provides \$4.1 million for the expansion of eligibility for the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program; it increases the income limit for the deductible plan from \$35,000 to \$75,000 for those who are single and \$50,000 to \$100,000 for those who are married. Additionally, the final budget rejects the governor's recommendation to eliminate allowing spousal refusal, and restores \$10 million. The practice of spousal refusal protects healthy spouses from being required to spend their life savings to care for ill spouses in need of long-term care.

Access to affordable, quality health care is the right of every New Yorker; this includes the right to be treated at a facility that has the most up-to-date infrastructure. The budget invests in our health care systems' infrastructure by including a new \$1.2 billion capital program. The funding will support projects that improve financial stability and increase efficiency of health care providers. These funds will complement the \$8 billion federal Medicaid Waiver program that will reinvest savings into the transformation of New York's health care system.

Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund

Recognizing the need for health care research, the budget also provides \$7 million in support for the Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund.

REDUCING THE PROPERTY TAX BURDEN

The budget offers tax relief for New York City residents by providing \$85 million in tax credits for homeowners, condominium and co-op owners, and renters by implementing a "circuit breaker" plan. The "circuit breaker" will run for 2 years and will factor in household income for the property tax break.

KEEPING NEW YORK AFFORDABLE

Last year, the Assembly fought to phase out the 18-a utility surcharge imposed on energy bills. The 18-a utility surcharge is an unnecessary burden on ratepayers and with utility prices climbing, it's more important than ever to reduce costs for consumers. This year's budget accelerates the phase-out, lowering the surcharge rates by \$200 million annually for both residential and commercial customers and \$600 million over the next three years.



STRENGTHENING HOUSING PROGRAMS

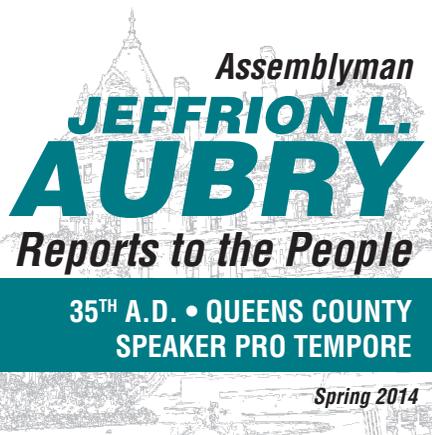
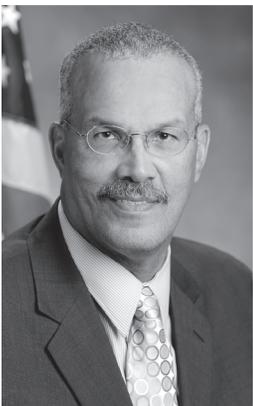
Obtaining affordable housing continues to be a struggle for many working families; the budget continues to support programs that help to solve this problem so every New Yorker has safe, quality housing available to them. Specifically, the budget restores \$2.2 million to the Neighborhood and Rural Preservation programs. These programs aim to revitalize neighborhoods around the state to restore the vibrancy of communities, resulting in more affordable housing and an increased positive economic outlook.

The budget also restores \$742,000 in funding for the New York City Housing Authority Tenant Watch Program. In addition, the budget increases the income limit for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) from \$29,000 to \$50,000 for a two-year period. Another \$200,000 is provided for a grandparent housing study, which could shed light on the increasing occurrence of children living with a grandparent or elderly relative and its affordable housing implications.

\$312 Million in Funds Received From the Mortgage Foreclosure Settlement With JPMorgan Chase

The budget plan also outlines how over \$312 million in funds received from the mortgage foreclosure settlement with JPMorgan Chase will be used. The funds will be spent over several years to aid New Yorkers facing housing and foreclosure issues by:

- Providing funding for housing counselors;
- Running state and local foreclosure assistance hotlines;
- Operating state and local foreclosure mediation programs;
- Providing legal assistance; and
- Creating housing remediation and anti-blight projects.



Assemblyman **JEFFRION L. AUBRY**

Highlights of the Final New York State Budget SFY 2014-15

- The Assembly makes historic \$1.1 billion dollar investment in education
- Supporting small businesses and MWBE's
 - Supporting family planning
- Strengthening New York's child care system
 - Investing in vital health care programs
 - Reducing property tax burden
 - Keeping New York affordable
- Strengthening housing programs