



Assemblymember

Vivian E. Cook

Reports to the People

Summer 2016

Dear Neighbors:

The 239th Legislative Session began on January 6, 2016 and concluded on June 17th. This year the on-time 2016-17 New York State Budget includes measures to revitalize the economy and support families. The \$146.7 billion plan invests in education, helps lift families out of poverty, allows more young New Yorkers to get a college education, cuts taxes, and helps grow the state economy.

The final state budget is a bold step forward for the working families of our state and paves the way for a brighter future for all New Yorkers. Landmark accomplishments were made, including a robust increase in the minimum wage which has long been a priority of the Assembly Majority, and New York families will greatly benefit from their enactment. This fair and fiscally responsible plan is what our state needs to move forward.

I am pleased that during my tenure in the Assembly I have been able to secure funding for a number of worthwhile local community organizations which include York College, Rochdale Village, Friends of Rochdale Village Library, Rochdale Village Senior Center, Rochdale NORC, Rockaway Boulevard Senior Center, Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica, P.S. 223 Afterschool Center, and J-CAP. I will continue to work on behalf of all my constituents and continue fighting to bring funding into the district that would be beneficial to the community I represent.

As a way of giving back to the community, I donate the space for my district office, thus saving New York State thousands of dollars yearly. My office is located at 142-15 Rockaway Blvd. Please feel free to stop by or call if you are in need of any assistance.

In closing, I would like to offer my most sincere congratulations and best wishes to the members of the Class of 2016. May this tremendous accomplishment be only the first of many proud and successful moments for each and every one of you!

Sincerely,

Vivian E. Cook

Highlights of the 2016-17 Legislative Budget

Investing in Our Schools and Our Children

The 2016-17 state budget increases education aid by \$1.47 billion – or 6.3 percent – for a total of \$24.7 billion, representing the largest investment in education in New York history and highlighting the Assembly’s commitment to helping every child achieve their full potential. In addition, to help ensure all New York State schools are fairly funded and have the resources they need to provide a quality education, the state budget increases Foundation Aid by \$627 million.

“We owe it to our children to provide a good, comprehensive education that challenges and empowers them so that each and every student has the skills they need to succeed in college and build a secure life for themselves,” Assemblymember Cook said. “This year’s budget strengthens our public school system so that it fosters innovation, instills in all students a desire to learn, and grants every child a fair shot at success.”

The budget also provides \$433 million to fully eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) once and for all, putting an end to the hardship it has caused our schools and to the burden it has placed on local taxpayers. Finally doing away with the GEA will help prevent teacher layoffs and program cuts, noted Assemblymember Cook.

Additionally, the budget allocates \$175 million to transform struggling and high-needs schools into community schools, which provide

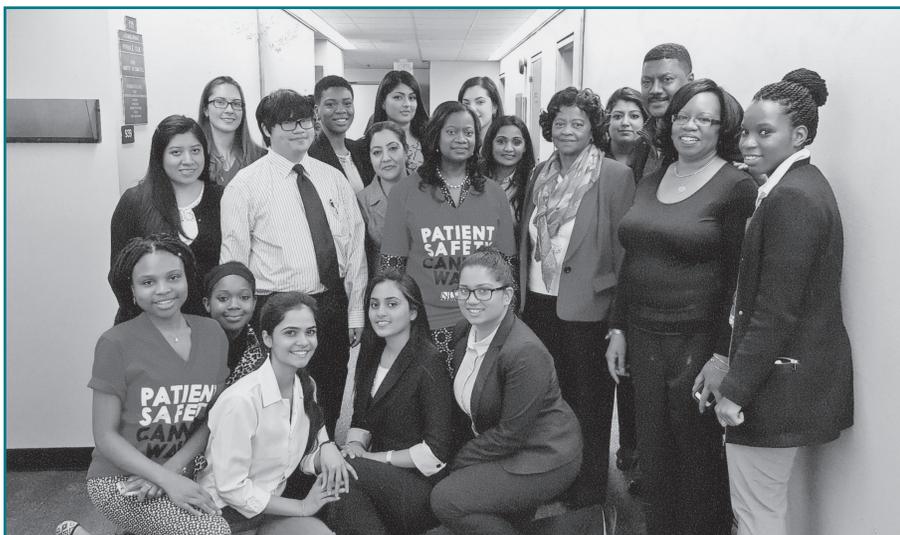
a number of crucial services to students and their families, including mentoring, health care, summer programs, and job training. By converting these schools into community schools, they can be turned into valuable centers that provide much-needed support to at-risk youth and their families and address the issues associated with poverty, as well as help prevent the schools from being taken over by the state.

The budget also includes:

- \$47 million to unfreeze the reimbursement of expense-based aids;
- \$3 million for Early College High School grants, which help at-risk students earn both a high school diploma and an associate’s degree; and
- \$1 million for Career and Technical Education (CTE), while specifying that the funding must be used to reduce barriers faced by English language learners and students with disabilities, as well as promote gender diversity in CTE programs.

The federal My Brother’s Keeper initiative was established by President Obama to address the enduring opportunity gaps faced by minority males. To carry out the goals of this initiative, the budget provides \$20 million to implement the Board of Regents’ recommendations from its Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color.

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Welcome to Albany - York College



Assemblymember Cook met with York College School of Nursing students to discuss safe staffing.

And to further strengthen education services, the budget provides:

- \$1.5 million for the NYC Community Learning Schools Initiative, which works to provide vital services to public school students and their families;
- \$1 million increase in bilingual education services funding, for a total of \$15.5 million;
- \$500,000 restoration in aid to educational television and radio, for a total of \$14.5 million;
- \$14.3 million for Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers;
- \$1.5 million in restorations for the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE), for a total of \$13 million, to provide career training and job placement services;
- \$2.3 million increase in funding for 4201 schools for the blind and deaf;
- \$1 million in additional funding for adult literacy education, for a total of \$7.2 million;
- \$2 million in assistance for economically disadvantaged middle school students preparing for the Specialized High School Admission Test;
- \$500,000 to offset advanced placement test fees for economically disadvantaged youth;
- \$475,000 to restore funding for the Executive Leadership Institute, which offers professional development programs for school administrators;
- \$461,000 increase in funding for math and science high schools; and
- a requirement that the State Education Department produce a report on how to accurately measure the number of children that qualify for free or reduced price lunch in school districts that participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision program.

Recognizing the importance and lasting benefit of early childhood education, the budget provides \$807 million for continued implementation and development of the statewide universal pre-kindergarten program. The budget also continues funding the Smart Schools program, which increases and improves education technology and infrastructure in schools throughout the state, at \$2 billion.

“Putting our kids on the path to success starts in our schools,” Assemblymember Cook said. “So this isn’t just an investment in education, it’s an investment in our communities, our economy and our future.”

Strengthening NY’s Higher Education System

A college education equips students with the tools to grow, learn, and succeed in the evolving economy. The 2016-17 state budget invests in New York’s public college system, making higher education more accessible and affordable for all.

“A college degree should not be a luxury – it’s something every student in this state should have access to,” Assemblymember Cook said. “We strongly invested in our higher education system to ensure all New Yorkers have the chance to earn a college degree and the success that can come with it.”

Freezing Tuition to Help Students

Investing in SUNY

The budget also provides an increase of \$18 million in operating funds for SUNY.

“We can’t expect our students to get good jobs and achieve economic security if they can’t afford the very thing that will get them there – a college degree,” Assemblymember Cook said. “We must do all we can to make higher education more accessible while also preventing students from falling into the black hole of student loan debt. By saying no to tuition hikes, we are signaling our commitment to doing just that, so every New Yorker has a chance to get ahead.”

Community colleges play a vital role in New York’s public higher education system. To strengthen these schools, the budget includes \$13.3 million in support for SUNY community colleges for an increase of \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, for a total of \$2,697 per FTE student. The budget also includes \$1.5 million for SUNY’s Graduate Achievement Placement (GAP) program, which aims to accelerate a student’s rate of graduation.

The 2016-17 state budget also:

- restores support for SUNY Health Science Centers by \$18.6 million, to help support New York’s world-class teaching hospitals;
- increases funding for Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) by \$5 million, for a total of \$60 million;
- increases funding for ATTAIN work training computer labs by \$2 million, for a total of \$6.5 million;



Assemblymember Cook welcomes four Tuskegee Airmen to the State Capitol in honor of the group’s 75th Anniversary.

- restores \$1.5 million for Small Business Development Centers; and
- restores \$600,000 for the Graduate Diversity Fellowship Program.
- restores \$1.1 million in funding to SUNY child care centers.

Investing in CUNY

The 2016-17 budget ensures that tuition at CUNY schools will not be raised during the coming academic year because every New Yorker has the right to receive an affordable college education. The budget also provides an increase of \$12 million in operating funds for CUNY.

The budget also includes \$2.5 million for CUNY’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which provides motivated community college students with the comprehensive support they need to earn their degrees as quickly as possible.

To strengthen community colleges, the budget includes \$6.2 million in support for CUNY community colleges for an increase of \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, for a total of \$2,697 per FTE student.

To ensure CUNY students, faculty, staff and the community have continued access to a quality, affordable child care option, the final budget restores \$902,000 in funding to CUNY child care centers.

Further, in a victory for the CUNY system, the budget rejects the governor’s proposal to shift \$485 million of CUNY operating expenses to New York City, protecting and maintaining the quality of education and programs offered by the schools. “The City of New York should not be forced to unfairly foot the bill for state costs,” noted Assemblymember Cook.

Strengthening College Opportunity Programs

The budget also provides a 20 percent increase over last year, for a total of \$23.8 million, for the following opportunity programs:

- Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP): \$35.5 million, an increase of \$5.9 million;
- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP): \$32.2 million, an increase of \$5.4 million;
- Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge program (SEEK): \$28.1 million, an increase of \$4.7 million;
- Liberty Partnerships: \$18.4 million, an increase of \$3.1 million;
- Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP): \$15.8 million, an increase of \$2.6 million;
- Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP): \$11.9 million, an increase of \$1.9 million; and
- College Discovery Program: \$1.3 million, an increase of \$225,000.

Additionally, the budget allocates \$3 million for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative – an increase of \$1.5 million – to help these students overcome the challenges associated with being a part of the foster care system and support them throughout their college careers.

Giving New Yorkers a Raise

“Every New Yorker who puts in an honest day’s work deserves a livable wage,” Assemblymember Cook said. “The state budget recognizes this and increases the minimum wage to help lift working families out of poverty and give them a pathway to the middle class.”

The minimum wage increase reflects the disparate costs of living and economic realities in various regions of the state. As a result, there will be different phase-in periods for upstate and downstate communities. In New York City, the minimum wage will increase to \$11 at the end of 2016, followed by \$2 increases each year after, reaching \$15

2017 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET

an hour on Dec. 31, 2018. For New York City businesses with 10 or fewer employees, the minimum wage will increase to \$10.50 at the end of 2016, followed by \$1.50 increases each of the following years and reach \$15 on Dec. 31, 2019.

For Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties the minimum wage will increase to \$10 at the end of 2016, then increase by \$1 each year and reach \$15 on Dec. 31, 2021.

And in upstate communities, the wage will increase to \$9.70 at the end of 2016, followed by \$0.70 increases each year and reach \$12.50 on Dec. 31, 2020. The minimum wage will then potentially be increased to \$15 according to an indexed schedule set by the Division of Budget and the Department of Labor. For tipped workers, the budget pegs their wage at two-thirds of the minimum wage rounded either to the nearest five cents or to \$7.50, whichever is higher.

Annual studies will be conducted by the Division of Budget starting in 2019 to gauge economic impact and determine if a temporary suspension of the wage increases is warranted.

“The rising cost of child care is forcing too many New Yorkers to choose between their job and their family,” Assemblymember Cook said. “The state budget ensures that families have access to child care opportunities so that working parents can pursue their careers with peace of mind knowing that their children are being taken care of.”

The budget includes \$24.9 million for various child care opportunities. It allocates \$10.6 million for facilitated enrollment, which provides 12 months of child care subsidies for working and middle-income families who meet employment and income requirements. The facilitated enrollment allotment includes \$6.2 million for New York City and restores \$2.6 million for upstate communities.

The final budget contains additional programs that further benefit children across New York State:

- \$5 million for Advantage Afterschool, which offers extracurricular activities for students in a positive environment;
- \$3 million for Safe Harbor, which provides support for sexually exploited youth;
- \$3 million for Kinship Care with \$100,000 allocated for Kinship Navigator, a support-system for non-parent child caregivers;
- \$2.5 million for Settlement Houses, which support community needs through programs that include extracurricular activities and vocational programs;
- \$2 million for QUALITYstarsNY, which works to build a sustainable and high-quality child care system throughout New York State; and
- \$1.7 million for the Youth Development Program, an initiative that offers training in important life skills and promotes community involvement.

Cutting Taxes for Middle-Class Families

In order to provide additional assistance to working and middle-income families, the budget will cut personal income taxes by \$270 million in 2018 compared to 2017 tax rates. These tax savings will increase to approximately \$3 billion by 2025 when the middle-class tax rate reductions are fully phased in. The cuts would incrementally reduce the middle-class tax rates for single filers earning between \$13,000 and \$200,000, heads of households earning between \$19,500 and \$250,000, and married couples earning between \$26,000 and \$300,000. Tax rates for brackets in these ranges would decrease from the current 5.9 percent, 6.45 percent and 6.65 percent to 5.5 percent, 5.5 percent and 6.0 percent respectively, over eight years. These new tax cuts will benefit up to 6 million New Yorkers.

Protecting Public Health

The budget restores critical funding for public health programs and provides funding for health care infrastructure programs and \$2.9 million for restorations, including support for HIV/AIDS programs, family planning services, and the community health advocates program.

“Quality, affordable health care is a basic right, and every New Yorker deserves access to it,” Assemblymember Cook said. “Good medical care should not be a luxury reserved for the wealthy.”

In addition, the budget provides important Medicaid funding, including funding to offset the costs of medications and long-term care, as well as coverage for inmates within the final 30 days of their incarceration in a prison or local jail.

To help expand access to necessary medicines, the budget includes:

- \$20.7 million to preserve prescriber prevails, which ensures patients and their doctors have the final say in choosing medications;
- \$6 million to reject price ceilings for blockbuster drugs;
- \$1.8 million to prevent a reduction in reimbursement rates for specialty drugs; and

Assemblymember Cook met with Jacques Leandre, Esq., Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to Local 372 President Shaun D. Francois I, on Local 372's lobby day in Albany to discuss issues of importance to their members.



- \$160,000 to preserve the Clinical Drug Review Program (CDRP) and ensure drugs are used in a medically appropriate manner.

The Assembly proposal also restores \$10 million to preserve spousal refusal, ensuring couples do not lose their life savings in the event a spouse becomes ill. For seniors living on a fixed income, this program is vital because the costs of long-term care can be financially ruinous.

Additionally, the budget provides vital funding to support long-term care, including:

- \$11.2 million to prevent the carve-out of long-term care transportation management;
- \$5.7 million to protect community spouse resources;
- \$5.6 million to reduce the Medicare Part C co-insurance cut; and
- \$1.9 million to prevent limiting Managed Long Term Care eligibility to those eligible for nursing homes.

Investing In Infrastructure, Improving Transportation

“Safe, reliable roads, bridges and public transportation are critical for New Yorkers,” said Assemblymember Cook. “That’s why we are making this significant investment in our infrastructure – it’s essential to a growing economy to have a reliable transportation network.”

The budget will provide \$7.3 billion for the MTA’s 2015-19 capital plan over four years. It will fund improvements to the authority’s transportation infrastructure, which includes the purchase of new buses, subway and train cars, transit station improvements, and modern signal systems.

The Assembly successfully pushed for \$950 million in additional funding for the MTA’s Second Avenue Subway project, including \$500 million in the MTA’s 2015-19 capital plan. In addition, the project will receive, as part of the budget agreement, Capital Program Review Board approval of another \$450 million for the authority’s next capital plan in order to extend subway service to New York City’s East Harlem area.

A significant funding increase of \$1.04 billion is also made to DOT’s five-year capital plan, which will provide an increase of \$860 million to the state’s Highway and Bridge program. The DOT capital plan also will provide, over four years, an additional \$100 million for non-MTA downstate and upstate transit systems, an extra \$50 million for rail projects statewide, and an increase of \$30 million for the Air99 aviation program.

To help local governments pay for road and bridge improvements in order to ensure their safety and reliability, the budget increases funding by \$400 million over four years for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs).

Important Capital Funding

The 2016-17 state budget includes a \$2 billion statewide capital program to improve infrastructure, enhance neighborhoods and make vital improvements to our communities. It also provides:

- \$100 million in additional support for New York Works, for a total appropriation of \$199 million;
- \$385 million for the State and Municipal Facilities Program;
- a \$500,000 carve-out for the Healthy Food Healthy Communities Initiative from the \$100 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative; and
- an additional \$5 million for Library Construction Grant Programs, which would increase library construction aid to \$19 million. This is the first increase in 10 years.



Assemblymember Cook met with UFT on their annual lobby day in Albany.

Protecting Veterans

Veterans and their families have made invaluable sacrifices for our country, and so we must support veterans and ensure they have access to vital resources. This year’s state budget provides \$1.62 million in restorations and additional funding for veterans over the executive proposal, including:

- \$500,000 for the Veterans Defense Program, which provides in-depth training, support and legal assistance to veterans and service members in the New York State criminal and family court systems;
- \$250,000 for the Veterans Farmer Program, which provides grants to help veterans who are beginning farmers;
- \$200,000 for Warrior Salute, which assists veterans coping with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and military sexual trauma;
- \$200,000 for Helmets-to-Hardhats, which connects veterans and transitioning members of the military with training and career opportunities to help ease the transition into civilian life; and
- a \$100,000 restoration to SAGEVets, which helps Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) veterans over the age of 50 access veteran benefits;

- \$100,000 for the Veterans Justice Project, which provides legal services to veterans and their families;
- \$40,000 for the Vietnam Veterans of America, which helps support Vietnam veterans and their families; and
- \$25,000 for Veterans Miracle Center, which provides veterans with vital goods and services.

“It’s our responsibility to do everything we can to honor the men and women who fought to defend our country and its values,” Assemblymember Cook said. “The state budget provides vital funding for programs that help our veterans and support them as they make the transition back to civilian life once they’ve come home.”

Helping Seniors

“Seniors have built their lives in our neighborhoods and played an integral role in helping them grow vibrant,” Assemblymember Cook said. “This year’s budget helps more elderly New Yorkers remain in their homes and continue to be a part of our communities. It ensures they receive the best possible care.”

The 2016-17 state budget restores \$951,000 for Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) and Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) programs, and provides an additional \$700,000. NORCs and NNORCs allow seniors to remain in their homes and communities by providing support services that include health monitoring and case management, as well as social activities to foster engagement. Current contracts are protected until Dec. 31, 2017, with important updates to the programs taking effect Jan. 1, 2018.

In addition, the budget includes:

- \$1 million in additional funding to support Community Services for the Elderly, which helps communities better serve seniors and ensure their needs are met;
- \$86,000 to restore support for the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens Home Sharing and Respite Care program, which helps seniors live fuller, safer lives in their own homes; and
- \$31,500 to restore support for the New York Statewide Senior Action Council, Inc. for the patients’ rights hotline and advocacy project to help low-income and minority seniors.



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