

**Written Testimony Submitted to Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2020-2021
Executive Budget Proposal: Topic Taxes**

My name is Allison Downing. I live in Morningside Heights, Manhattan in Senator Robert Jackson and Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell's districts.

I write in support of the idea that those who have so enormously benefitted from the glory that is our Empire State should contribute meaningfully to its continued greatness. The very wealthiest New Yorkers had opportunities that were paid for by our parents', grandparents', and great-grandparents' generations. Asking these few people to now give a hand up to the next generations is how they can pay it forward to build a better, stronger New York where all can thrive.

To do this, we must **reject the austerity mindset** that dominates this process. It is a false construct and must be resoundingly voted down. We are NOT a poor state. We are NOT in a fiscal crisis. We do NOT need to tighten belts or make cuts to programs that our most vulnerable citizens rely upon. There is plenty of money. All that is lacking is political will to recognize this and reject the untrue framing that we cannot increase taxes on the fabulously wealthy or spending for the vulnerable. We can do both and we must do both.

This is where you come in. I understand what *Silver v Pataki* means for the budget process. I understand that many of you believe that your hands are tied and that the Governor holds all the power. I understand that you have thought that your only chance to get scraps of funding for your constituents is by winning a death battle with another legislator and taking their scraps away from their constituents. This is not the case. You have lots of power, and I am writing to ask (maybe even demand) that you use it.

I challenge all of you, and all of your colleagues not on these committees, to stand firm and inform the Governor that you will not vote on any budget that does not increase revenue from our billionaires and centimillionaires. If you truly do stand firm, you can win, because **without votes, a bad budget cannot pass**. I challenge you to be more like Jennifer Aniston and Courteney Cox. When the executives of the TV show *Friends* were offering contract renewals to their six stars, and offered some of them more money than others, the six rejected that offer and stood firm together. They only signed once the producers agreed to pay each star the same amount. Be like Rachel and Monica. Stand firm with your colleagues to fight for those with less power and do not give in to bullying from the executive.

Please use your power to raise the billions our state needs from the people who have been most benefitted by New York. The billionaires and ultramillionaires will miss the money the least (in fact, I would posit that none of them will feel any real effect from their increased contributions to our state's welfare whatsoever), and our most vulnerable neighbors all across the state will benefit immeasurably. Stand strong, and **demand budget justice** in this process.

Thank you.