


CITY  OF  
**BUFFALO**

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MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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CITY OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK

TESTIMONY BEFORE  
NEW YORK STATE JOINT  
LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES  
REGARDING  
GOVERNOR'S 2024 RECOMMENDED STATE BUDGET

SUBMITTED  
FEBRUARY 15, 2023  
ALBANY, NEW YORK

## STATE BUDGET TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee on the impact of the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget on the City of Buffalo.

A special thanks to:

- Senate Finance Committee Chair Liz Krueger,
- Assembly Ways and Means Chair Helene Weinstein,
- Senate Local Government Committee Chair Monia Martinez and
- Assembly Local Government Committee Chair Fred Thiele,
- And, especially, Buffalo's Delegation Leaders, Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes and Senator Tim Kennedy

I am pleased to comment on Governor Hochul's Executive Budget on behalf of the over 280,000 residents of Buffalo New York. The past year has been a tough year for Buffalo: from the May 14th Tops racist mass shooting, to a historic November snowstorm, the once in a generation December '22 blizzard, the Damar Hamlin injury, and even an earthquake, the residents of Buffalo have been through a lot and are showing the world their strength, resilience, and unity. But we do need your help. While the Executive Budget does provide for Buffalo, we are requesting some critical items, including \$60 million to construct a Department of Public Works (DPW) Campus and Resiliency

Center, increased funding to the Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) program, additional funding for affordable housing, funding for transit-oriented development projects, and mental health funding for the Buffalo Police Department Behavioral Health Team.

Our current DPW building is vulnerable, the Broadway Garage, where our snowplows and garbage trucks deploy from, was built in the 1880s. The City of Buffalo is in the process of constructing a Public Works Campus to house the city's municipal snow plowing, garbage collection, paving, and construction vehicles; administrative offices; and auto impound. Consolidating those functions into one facility will reduce maintenance, energy, and training costs. Construction of the Campus will allow the city to sell the following five buildings, which are all in prime locations for redevelopment investments:

- Broadway Depot (maintenance, streets, and sanitation) – 195 Broadway Avenue
- Mechanical Services – 1326 Seneca Street
- Engineering – 1120 Seneca Street
- Parking Impound Lot – 166 Dart Street
- Mayor's Impact Team – 441 Beard Street

Buffalo needs a state-of-the-art, consolidated facility to allow for enhanced collaboration and reduction of inefficiencies, mutual aid, and to provide a resilient center of operations for future emergencies.

During the Blizzard of '22, more than 600 pieces of equipment from across the state were working in Buffalo. However, in some cases, outside aid cannot always reach the City because of weather and road conditions beyond our boundaries. The City must always be able to efficiently provide for the needs of our residents and regional neighbors.

In addition to our DPW plans, we remain confident FEMA will grant Governor Hochul's request for a Major Disaster Declaration for the December winter storm, which cost at least \$10.5 million. If we include the November snowstorm, this winter has cost the City at least \$15 million so far and federal support is necessary to help us repair and rebuild our City.

The Executive Budget does contribute to Buffalo's recovery and growth in several ways, including increased funding for the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) Initiative. I am encouraged to see additional funding for GIVE; this program generated concrete benefits in Buffalo, among other cities, which all aim to decrease gun violence. When an outsider came and attacked our community on May 14th, it absolutely rocked not just Buffalo, but also the region and the nation. I am not sure how many more times I, and my partners in government, can keep saying: gun reform and gun violence control is critical.

In addition to the heartbreaking loss and community trauma, responding to the May 14 Tops mass shooting cost the City over half a million dollars. That is something I never wanted to budget for, but

it has happened. In the aftermath of the attack, I filed a lawsuit against ghost fund manufacturers and gun industry members to press for change in the gun industry. The firearm industry can and must do better to reduce senseless gun violence.

The Governor's Budget proposal does include an exemplary project from Buffalo, by using the East Buffalo housing program as a model for the New York State Homeowner Stabilization Fund. This will help homeowners finance repairs, particularly among areas with high levels of low-income Black and Brown homeowners and homeowners in distress. This is exciting to hear, and I urge future host municipalities to ensure there is local, community involvement and management of the programs in order to bring the greatest benefits to the area and serve actual resident needs.

If the DPW Campus is funded in this budget, the department can relocate the City's Department of Streets and Sanitation from the Broadway garage, therefore freeing up that historic building to be rehabilitated as part of the African American Heritage Corridor.

Our Street Improvement Project on Bailey Avenue in East Buffalo would also benefit from state funding into this emerging area for investment.

In addition, I urge the enacted budget to include an increase in the arterial maintenance reimbursement rate paid by the State. The rising costs related to this work, which include paying our public employees a living wage, and the increased costs for equipment and materials, requires an increase in the State contribution for this critical infrastructure funding tied to the rate of inflation.

Another program that has been woefully underfunded in recent years is the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities funding. Buffalo's funding has remained flat for a decade, which forces us to do more with ever-shrinking dollars. I am hopeful the AIM funding is increased.

*Thank you.*