

Assembly Member
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**Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright Votes to Pass a State budget
that Serves all New Yorkers**

Investments made in Education, Transportation, Services for the Vulnerable and Programs for Economic Development in New York State



Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright (D-Upper East Side, Yorkville and Roosevelt Island) announced that she helped pass an on-time \$168.3 billion 2018-19 state budget that includes a nearly \$1 billion increase in education funding, new investments in transportation improvements, \$25 Million in capital support for Roosevelt Island Operations, child care and services for vulnerable populations—including senior citizens and the homeless-- and measures to keep guns out of the hands of known domestic violence offenders.

“Considering the looming federal budget deficit, we fought hard for a spending plan that stays true to our values in New York State,” said Seawright. “While great strides were made overall to keep the State moving forward, there were many issues that should be the subject of further review during the remainder of the legislative session. Overall, I am pleased at our progress in the face of the challenges of a hostile federal administration,” said Seawright.

Transportation and Funding the MTA Subway Action Plan

The budget fully funds the Subway Action Plan – providing that New York City will fund half of \$836 million plan in order to make immediate repairs to improve subway performance and maintenance.

Millions of New Yorkers rely on bus and subway services to get around the city, but the system is in crisis. The 2018-19 state budget fully funds the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s (MTA) Subway Action Plan – for a total of \$836

million – to make emergency repairs and enhance subway performance. New York State and New York City will share the responsibility of funding the initiative.

The plan also expands select bus services throughout the city so residents can get around more easily and reach their destinations on time. Additionally, a long-term funding stream for New York City public transportation has been established by enacting a \$2.75 surcharge on for-hire vehicles, \$2.50 for yellow cabs and \$0.75 for pooled trips below 96th Street in Manhattan. There are also plans to provide funding to install no less than 50 new traffic monitoring cameras on Transit Authority buses to reduce congestion and increase safety on our roads.

Banning Guns from Domestic Violence Abusers

The Domestic Violence Escalation Prevention Act was passed as part of our continued efforts to keep guns out of the wrong hands and prevent gun violence in New York (A.10272).

“Domestic violence is not only cruel, it’s the ultimate betrayal of trust and it’s a scourge on society,” said Seawright. “The statistics are startling. With nearly three women murdered every day by an intimate partner, it is clear that one of the critical steps in preventing these brutal tragedies is making sure that known abusers do not have a gun.”

The measure prohibits an individual who has been convicted of a domestic violence crime from purchasing or possessing a firearm. The measure also:

- establishes a clear process for notifying the FBI of domestic violence convictions for the purposes of identifying individuals prohibited from purchasing or possessing firearms when a background check is conducted;
- prevents individuals with an outstanding warrant for a felony or serious offense crime, including a domestic violence misdemeanor, from being eligible for a firearms license; and
- creates a new requirement that the court order the surrender of all firearms following a conviction of a felony or serious offense, including domestic violence misdemeanors.

Seawright noted that the act is a step forward in protecting our communities, especially since there’s a clear link between domestic violence and mass shootings. In nine of the 10 deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history, the shooter had a known history of harassing, threatening or abusing women. In fact, the majority of mass shooters in the U.S. killed their intimate partners or family members.

“From mass shootings to the far-too-routine violence that plagues neighborhoods and leaves families scared to walk the streets, we need to do more,” said Seawright.

Standing Up Against Sexual Harassment

The state budget that takes overdue steps to address and combat sexual harassment and provide more recourse for victims.

“Harassment and sexual misconduct are too often known of, but not spoken about for fear of retaliation,” said Seawright. “The brave voices that rose to say ‘#MeToo’ broke that silence. By passing stronger anti-harassment laws, we are giving victims the power they deserve to pursue justice and making sure the perpetrators of these degrading acts are held accountable.”

It includes legislation to ensure that employers across the state have comprehensive policies to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. Moreover, the measure bars confidentiality clauses in any settlement except when specifically requested by the victim. It also allows a state or local government that has paid a victim for a sexual harassment claim on

behalf of a public employee to recover payment from the employee responsible for the harassment. Further, it would ban mandatory arbitration agreements for claims of sexual harassment.

Supporting Seniors

The state budget restores \$8.16 million to support long-term care. It also restores \$7.81 million to preserve spousal refusal, ensuring couples do not lose their life savings in the event a spouse becomes ill and needs nursing home care, and rejects the proposal to limit the amount of resources a community spouse is allowed to retain.

“The decision to move a spouse to a long-term care facility is never an easy one,” said Seawright. “When that choice is made, though, no one should be forced to give up their economic security to ensure their loved one gets the care they need. For seniors living on a fixed income, this program is vital because the costs of long-term care can be financially draining.”

Additionally, the budget restores \$13.99 million in hospital and nursing home reductions, protecting hospital and nursing capital reimbursements. It also restores \$12 million in managed care reductions.

Protecting Affordable Health Care

“Affordable, quality health care should be a human right, but far too often, New Yorkers are forced to choose between the prescriptions they need and putting food on the table or paying rent,” said Seawright. “That should never be anyone’s reality, and that’s why we made sure this budget protects vital health programs, especially in the face of a federal administration that’s seeking to make drastic cuts.”

The budget addresses rising drug and health insurance costs so that more New Yorkers have access to the health care they need. It restores \$29.13 million for pharmacy initiatives, including:

- a \$17.4 million restoration to existing prescriber prevails provisions, which ensure patients and their doctors have the final say in choosing medication in managed care and fee-for-service plans; and
- \$11.28 million to increase over-the-counter (OTC) drugs and increase OTC co-payments.

The budget also protects the hospitals and facilities that provide critical care to New York’s most vulnerable. It provides:

- a total of \$525 million in health transformation capital funding;
- an increase of \$15 million for enhanced safety-net facilities that provide care to large Medicaid populations, for a total of \$25 million; and
- an increase of \$15 million for critical access and sole community hospitals, which provide services in rural communities, for a total of \$25 million.

To ensure the public health programs New Yorkers rely on can continue providing care to the communities they serve, the budget allocates \$9.19 million to protect 30 public health programs from consolidation. The Assembly also fought to restore funding for Community Health Advocates, which helps New Yorkers understand their health insurance and access the health care services they need, HIV/AIDS Community Service Programs, family planning services and the Nurse Family Partnership. The budget also allocates \$5 million to expand programs to support individuals with Hepatitis C.

Additionally, the budget restores \$25.82 million to protect Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) and adult day health care transportation services.

Investing in Public Education

The 2018-2019 state budget includes a total of \$26.6 billion in education funding. That is an increase of \$914 million – or 3.6 percent – over the last year.

Strengthening Child Care for New York State Families

“Every parent wants the best for their kids, which is why it’s so important that facilities and staff members tasked with taking care of children have the proper funding to provide the best services available,” Seawright said.

The budget invests close to \$80 million to ensure safe, affordable child care, including:

- \$31 million for pre-licensure and annual licensing inspections for child care providers;
- \$17 million for conducting background checks on child care providers and staff members;
- \$15 million for infant and toddler care quality efforts;
- \$12 million for ongoing training on health and safety programs; and
- \$2 million for staffing system changes.

The state budget also provides a minimum of \$10 million for new subsidized child care slots.

\$25 Million in Capital Appropriation for Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Included in Budget

\$25 million for Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to fund a multi-year capital improvement program on Roosevelt Island as agreed to by the State in relation to the Cornell Tech development.

“I am happy to secure this funding for my Roosevelt Island constituents.” said Seawright.

Fighting Homelessness

Homelessness is a crisis in New York State, which is why the budget continues the state’s affordable and homeless housing and services initiative. The funding will continue to support the creation or maintenance of the program’s 100,000 units of affordable housing and 6,000 units of supportive housing.

“Everyone needs a place to call home, and that home should not be temporary or unsafe,” Seawright said. “Regardless of an individual’s situation, they should have a roof over their head, a comfortable bed and a nice meal.”

The state budget includes the establishment of a program in New York City for families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Under the program, individuals and families would be offered a rental supplement up to 100 percent of the fair market rent for up to four years.

Also included in the state budget is funding to increase mental health and substance use disorder services for homeless individuals. The Office of Mental Health and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance will work alongside Assertive Community Treatment teams to provide services and assistance for individuals with mental illness living in homeless shelters. Additionally, on-site substance use disorder treatment services will be made available in 14 existing shelters across the state by the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Under this year’s state budget, it is required that all local social services districts develop and implement an approved outreach and services plan to address street homelessness.

Penn Station

The state budget included a controversial provision for the State to condemn, acquire or transfer the property in the area

surrounding Penn Station. This was touted as an improvement to public safety that the State will now coordinate with the MTA and community leaders, business groups, federal and city governments to plan for development in the Penn Station area. “This action subverts the authority of New York City, the well-being of prosperous businesses in mid-town Manhattan, and local community board planning processes” said Seawright.

State Educational Standards for Non-Public Schools

State law requires students attending non-public schools to receive a “substantially equivalent” education as those in public schools, particularly in the fields of mathematics, science, history and English. Educational standards ensure students across the state receive a quality education that gives them the tools they need to succeed.

In the final budget deal, these standards were relaxed for non-profit and non-secular schools that provide instruction time of at least nine hours each weekday. If a non-profit or non-secular school operates between the hours of 9 AM and 6 PM or longer, the length of their school day will satisfy state requirements, regardless of how much time or energy is devoted towards core subjects like math, science or English. Assembly Member Seawright believes this may create an unequal playing field for the children and makes it harder for the NYS Department of Education to enforce critical educational standards. The impact of this relation will need to be carefully monitored.