

Assemblymember

Ellen Jaffee

Assembly District 97

Dear Friends,

The Assembly worked hard to help pass a [2017-18 state budget](#) that makes a robust investment in public education, funds a first-in-the-nation free college tuition plan, Raises the Age to give youth a second chance, and ensures the wealthy pay their fair share. I am proud of the Assembly Majority's record of progressive commitment to funding programs that support families, children, older adults, direct care workers, our most vulnerable, and those who are struggling to lift themselves up. The future of this great state depends on the investments we are willing to make today - in fairness, equal opportunities, and the success of every New Yorker. This newsletter provides more in-depth information about the final budget and what we accomplished together. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Best Wishes,

Ellen

Investing in Education

The 2017-18 state budget [increases education aid](#) by \$1 billion, a 4.1 percent increase over last year, reaffirming the Assembly Majority's unrelenting commitment to teachers, public schools, and equal opportunities for all students to succeed.

The budget:

- increases Foundation Aid by \$700 million, defeating the proposal to repeal the Foundation Aid formula entirely.
- increases Community Schools Aid by \$50 million
- expands half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds in high-need school districts like East Ramapo
- provides \$20 million for Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers – an increase of \$5.7 million;
- restores aid to public libraries by \$9 million, increases capital funding by \$10 million

[The Foster Youth College Success Initiative \(FYCSI\)](#)

I am proud that I was able to secure \$4.5 million, a \$1.5 million restoration and a \$1.5 million increase for the FYCSI program to help foster youth attend and succeed in college.

[The Excelsior Scholarship](#)

This free college tuition plan:

- allows eligible students to attend public colleges and universities tuition free
- makes a substantial investment in SUNY and CUNY schools
- helps expand access to higher education through scholarship and opportunity programs



Investing in Families and Children

As Chair of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families my priorities include ensuring that our hardworking low- and middle-income families have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early childhood education, as well as vital programs and services to support our most vulnerable.

I am disappointed that the budget does not make a more substantial investment in [child care subsidies](#). Without access to childcare, parents are not able to work, pursue their education, and move themselves out of poverty. While I was able to restore an additional \$20 million, for child care subsidies it does not provide the funding we need. I was also able to restore \$1.1 million to SUNY child care centers and \$902,000 to CUNY child care centers. It is critical that we invest in keeping our children healthy and safe and families self-sufficient. I will continue working to substantially increase child-care funding next year.

Being Fair to Direct Care Workers

[Direct care workers](#) are carefully trained to help our most vulnerable. From giving a voice to those who cannot speak, to lending a helping hand so that individuals with developmental disabilities can complete daily tasks with as much independence as possible, direct care workers devote themselves to others. The Assembly fought to ensure that the final state budget dedicated \$14 million in 2017-18 and \$146 million in 2018-19 to fund a two-year, living wage initiative for direct care workers with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

Extending the Millionaires Tax

With income inequality continuing to rise, we need to make the wealthy pay their fair share and do their part to help better fund our schools and vital programs. The 2017-18 budget extends the state millionaires tax for two years. It was set to expire at the end of this year. Revenue from the tax is crucial to funding important services and programs throughout the state, including infrastructure improvements. The number of New York millionaires has increased by 63 percent since 2009, when the tax was first implemented.



Tax Policies to Help the Middle Class

The budget implements previously approved middle-class income tax cuts. It also enhances the Child and Dependent Care Credit for taxpayers earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000. The credit is based on a sliding income scale for working parents who pay for child care or those who live with a spouse or dependent who is physically or mentally incapable of self-care.

Creating jobs, Investing in Economic Development

The Excelsior Jobs Program offers incentives for businesses to expand in and relocate to New York State by providing tax credits to firms making a substantial commitment to growth through either increased employment or through capital investment in a New York facility.

The budget:

- makes more businesses eligible for the The Excelsior Jobs Program
- doubles the Excelsior Jobs Program research and development tax credit
- extends the Youth Works Job Program for five years
- provides \$70 million for the Restore New York Communities Initiative,
- provides \$385 million for the State and Municipal Facilities Program to improve infrastructure, enhance neighborhoods and make vital improvements to our communities.

Raise the Age

The budget includes a measure to ensure young people who encounter New York's criminal justice system are treated fairly and given a better chance to turn their lives around. [Raise the Age](#), which raises the age of criminal responsibility in New York from 16 to 18 years old, is an issue the Assembly Majority has championed for more than 12 years.



Expanding Access to the Legal System

All New Yorkers deserve help to effectively navigate the legal system, regardless of race, socio-economic or immigration status. The state budget provides \$10 million to expand immigrant legal defense services, as well as restores \$8.4 million to support legal services, including an additional:

- \$1.06 million in support for the New York State Defenders Association;
- \$600,000 in support for immigrant legal services; and
- \$500,000 for alternatives to incarceration (ATI) programming.

Investing in Water Infrastructure and Clean Drinking Water

No one should have to worry about whether their water is safe to drink. The budget provides [\\$2.5 billion for water infrastructure](#) to help ensure clean drinking water by repairing and replacing old pipes and water mains, as well as preventive measures, such as source water land acquisition, to keep water from becoming polluted. The budget also provides \$100,000 for the Rockland Water Task Force.

Supporting Seniors' Health and Well-Being



Seniors have played an integral role in the growth of our communities and the county. This year's budget helps more older New Yorkers to remain in their homes and to receive the best possible care.

The budget:

- provides \$13.5 million to support long-term care, including restoring \$10 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.
- increases funds for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NNORCs) for a total of \$2 million, which help keep seniors in the homes and neighborhoods where they have built friendships and support networks.

STAR

To protect seniors' hard-earned and well-deserved property tax relief, the budget rejects the executive proposal to change the Enhanced STAR program by requiring all seniors eligible for the Enhanced STAR program to register with the state and participate in the Income Verification Program. Currently, though, seniors are able to register with their local assessor or register when they file their income tax returns – a process that is far easier and causes fewer headaches.

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