



ASSEMBLYMEMBER PATRICIA A. FAHY



Legislative & Community Report to the 109th Assembly District

Dear Neighbors,

I am honored to represent Albany, Bethlehem, Guilderland, and New Scotland in the New York State Assembly. Each year, I work closely with my Assembly colleagues to negotiate the Governor's budget ensuring that the final state budget voted on is one that best reflects the needs and well being of my constituents in the 109th District and the State of New York.

This year's budget has numerous positive aspects that are detailed below, though there were other troubling aspects particularly concerning the education budget related to testing and teacher evaluation. Concerns remain that the tests being given do not adequately measure teacher quality or student learning. Also, teachers need increased access to test questions to better prepare students for the tests. I continue to question the value of increased testing and its impact on the quality of children's education.

Work is underway through legislation I am cosponsoring to ensure that test questions are readable and grade-level appropriate to provide a one year extension for the implementation of Common Core teacher evaluations and more.

Your thoughts and input on this and many other important issues is valuable to me and I welcome your viewpoints. Please feel free contact my office by phone, e-mail or social media, and sign up for our regular e-mail updates by sending a note to fahyp@assembly.state.ny.us.

Assemblymember
PATRICIA A. FAHY

2015 BUDGET SUMMARY

The 2015-2016 enacted budget includes a host of increased funds and opportunities for residents, businesses, and schools in New York State. Agriculture, economic development, transportation, family assistance, and more have seen aid increases for this upcoming year.

As mentioned in my last newsletter regarding education funding from the budget, despite some troubling aspects of the budget, there are a number of important, positive components. Some of these include: an unprecedented increase in education funding of \$1.6 billion – a nearly 60 percent reduction in the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), an increase in Foundation Aid, \$30 million

increase in upstate funding for Pre-K, and \$20 million in funding for libraries, teacher centers, and bilingual education. This increase includes an additional \$10 million in education funds into the 109th District, with each school district getting between seven to ten percent increased state aid.

Moreover, the work continues – the omnibus budget was not an easy vote and my work does not end with the vote. I am sponsoring legislation with Assembly colleagues to maximize flexibility in these policy changes for local schools and for teacher evaluations.

Here are a few highlights:

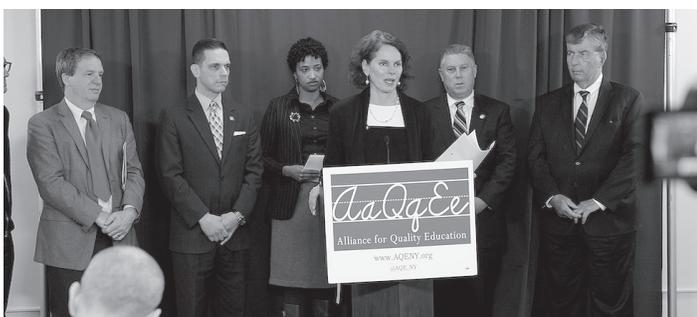
Higher Education

The budget includes significant increases for higher education institutions within New York State, including:

- Designation of a new **SUNY Center for Excellence at the University at Albany** with a first year allocation of \$250,000! I am proud to have sponsored this request for designation on behalf of UAlbany. This will be the newest SUNY Center for Excellence in the state and only the second of its kind in the region. Further, this designation will be awarded to the new **Atmospheric and Environmental Prediction and Innovation Center** and will help in building the prestige of the program as well as enhancing their competitiveness for funding.

- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP): \$4.4 million increase for a total of \$26.8 million.
- Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP): \$3.8 million increase for a total of \$29.6 million.
- Liberty Partnerships: \$1.9 million increase for a total of \$15.3 million.
- Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP): \$1.7 million increase for a total of \$13.1 million.
- Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP): \$1.3 million increase for a total of \$9.9 million.

Higher Education (cont'd on page 2)



Assemblymember Fahy joined fellow legislative colleagues Alliance for Quality Education of New York, and education stakeholders in urging for increased aid to education funding in New York State.

Transit

Working with fellow Upstate legislators on transit advocacy, a coalition formed to increase support for public transit. One of the most significant successes in the budget includes hard fought increases to upstate transit systems, including the CDTA, while maintaining levels of current funding for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS). Transit will receive:

- \$15 million increase in capital funding.
- \$10 million increase in operating aid, for a total of \$188.6 million.

Higher Education (cont'd from page 1)

The agreement supports SUNY programs as follows:

- \$8.5 million for **ATTAIN** work-training computer labs—a \$500,000 increase from last year—which will assist in the funding of the new, local **ATTAIN lab at the Capital South Campus Center**.
- \$1.5 million increase to Educational Opportunity Centers, for a total of \$53.5 million.



Assemblymember Fahy and Bethlehem Town Supervisor John Clarkson pedaling away in celebration of Bike to Work Day.

Childcare and Afterschool

The budget included increased funding for access to affordable child care, including the following:

- \$5 million to provide support for 600 child care slots.
- \$19.3 million for the **Advantage Afterschool Program** - with an increase of \$1.5 million.
- \$9.3 million for Facilitated Enrollment to expand eligibility for child care assistance to working families with incomes up to 275 percent of the federal poverty level, allowing parents to stay employed while their children are cared for in safe environments.
- \$1.3 million increase for SUNY Child Care Centers, for a total of \$2.3 million.
- \$3 million in **QUALITYstarsNY** funding for the quality rating system for childcare.



Assemblymember Fahy reading to Pre-K kids at Club Feb Child Care Center at the Leo O'Brien Federal Building to promote vital early literacy.

Wastewater and Sewer Fund

The Assembly was successful in adding an unprecedented \$200 million appropriation for grants to municipalities for critical improvements in wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. The funding, which will be provided over a three year period, will help municipalities undertake essential projects to benefit water quality. A thanks and shout out to Assemblymembers Steve Otis and John McDonald, two former mayors, for their leadership in advocating for this fund.

Healthcare

The budget included the following funding increases for healthcare programs, including:

- a \$21.3 million restoration of 39 health programs that would have had their funding cut by 15 percent and been restructured into five grant pools, including:
 - \$6.8 million for public health workforce programs;
 - \$5.5 million for maternal and child health programs, including programs such as Community Maternity Services;
 - \$5.5 million for chronic disease prevention and control programs; and
 - \$4 million (\$1 million more than the governor's proposal) for the Nurse Family Partnership, a community health program that assists first-time and low-income mothers;
- \$3.3 million for the **Enhancing the Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL)** program to improve quality of care for residents of adult care facilities; an additional \$1.5 million for the **Spinal Cord Injury Research Program** for a total funding of \$8.5 million;
- a \$1.2 million restoration to save the New York State physician profile website, which allows New Yorkers to search for licensed doctors that fit their needs, as well as learn more about their current doctor, including any malpractice or other claims against them;
- \$750,000 in additional support for family planning services;
- \$525,000 for the **HIV/AIDS Community Service Program (CSP)**;
- \$525,000 for **HIV/AIDS Multi-Service Agencies (MSA)**;
- \$500,000 for **Community Health Advocates**;
- \$39,000 for the **New York State Coalition for School-Based Health Centers**.

Environment

The budget provides for a \$15 million increase in funding for the Environmental Protection Fund—for a total of \$177 million, however, we were unsuccessful in strongly advocating that Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative funds not be used to pay for this increase, and I will be writing more about this concern in future updates. On a much more positive front, a 10-year extension of the Brownfield Cleanup program was adopted, which helps redevelop previously contaminated properties. It also includes an increase to the financing authorization for the Superfund Program – which helps clean up contaminated properties—by \$1 billion over a 10-year period. Further, in response to the increased volume of crude oil from North Dakota and other states being transported through New York State, the budget strengthens the Oil Spill Fund by increasing the amount of funding available to clean up spills and authorizes \$2.1 million to be used for prevention and cleanup training.

Separately, the budget also provides \$300,000 for a drug disposal program to help prevent toxic materials from polluting our water supply.



Assemblymember Fahy joined Senator George Amedore, Assemblymen McDonald and Santabarbara, and Sheriff Craig Apple in announcing legislation that would assist law enforcement in emergency situations such as the Kenneth White murder.

The bill, which passed both houses and now awaits the governor's signature, allows for critical, necessary access to child protection services information for law enforcement.

Ethics

A hard fought compromise on ethics also included in this year's budget, which requires public officials to disclose outside income received from non-government employment on annual financial disclosure forms. Starting Dec. 31, 2015, if a public official earns more than \$10,000 per year from non-government employment, the names of any clients, or customers from whom they receive more than \$5,000 must be disclosed the types of services provided to each client or customer must be described, or to the firm from which they received payment.

Public officials will also be required to report any referrals they receive from lobbyists, and officials who provide services related to matters before state agencies will be required to provide additional information regarding their clients and customers, as well as the compensation they receive.



Assemblymember Fahy speaks to the constituents at her Open House event in the legislative office building.

In addition, all public officials in a state or municipal retirement system convicted of public corruption may be required to forfeit their pensions, regardless of when they entered the system. Currently, the law only applies to officials who entered the system in 2011 or after.

The state budget also reforms the system of per diems and travel reimbursements for legislators by increasing electronic verification of expenditures and requiring documents related to travel and per diem expenses be made available online. As a local resident, I do not receive per diems or travel reimbursements, so this provision is not applicable to me or my office.



Assemblymember Fahy joined by Senator Gillibrand, Mayor Sheehan, and Assemblymember Santabarbara at an event during New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators Caucus Weekend.

Family Programs

The budget restores \$24 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) aid for every program eliminated in the governor's original budget proposal. The agreement funds the following vital programs at:

- \$3 million for Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services to assist domestic violence victims not residing in shelters.
- \$1.6 million for the Displaced Homemakers Program to provide counseling and job training to homemakers to help them secure employment and become economically independent.
- \$1.6 million for Preventive Services to provide prevention, intervention and treatment services to keep families together and children safe.
- \$1.5 million for Career Pathways to provide training to low-income young adults to prepare them for jobs in high-growth sectors.
- \$1 million for the Emergency Needs for the Homeless program to address homelessness and offer essential services to those in need.
- \$1 million for the Kinship Caregiver program to help caregivers access health, education, financial and legal services for children in their care.



Assemblymember Fahy joined fellow state legislators and local officials at the Rebuild NY press conference at the Harold L. Joyce Albany County Office Building in support of bolstering our state's infrastructure funding.

Libraries

The budget included the most significant increase funding for public libraries in years. Although fully-funded library aid would be calculated at \$102.6 million per state education law, the budget took a big step in the right direction in moving toward fully funded state aid for libraries.

- \$5 million increase in library aid over the Executive budget, bringing total library aid in FY2015-16 to \$91.6 million. This addresses a needed and overdue 6% increase in library funding over last year (\$86.6 million).
- \$14 million in library construction aid.



Assemblymember Fahy joined by Assemblymember John McDonald to talk about the importance of libraries and increasing library funding with members of the Upper Hudson Library System.



Assemblymember Fahy joins Congressman Tonko, County Executive McCoy, and CDTA CEO Carm Basile to advocate for increased Upstate transit funding in the state and federal budget.

2015 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Readability levels of state tests. I have introduced legislation to amend the education law to ensure all future New York State standardized tests from Grades 3 to 8 are provided at a readability level appropriate to the grade level being tested.

Students are unfairly disadvantaged when given standardized tests with questions written above their designated grade level. This bill requires the questions on future standardized assessments be readable at the appropriate grade level of the student. In other words, a third grade math test should not have questions written at a fifth grade readability level. Repeated concerns have been raised by parents, teachers, and education stakeholders about the grade appropriate reading level of questions on Grades 3 to 8 standardized state tests.

Petroleum Storage Surety bill reintroduced. I have reintroduced my Petroleum Storage Surety bill, which passed with strong bipartisan support in the Assembly last year, to ensure that the storage of crude oil must meet certain financial requirements to prevent taxpayers from being financially responsible should any accidents or spills occur when transferring or storing crude oil, such as at the Port of Albany.

The exponential rise of crude oil transportation can come with devastating consequences as we've seen in some communities across North America. This bill ensures that crude oil operators and storage facilities are responsible for their actions, not taxpayers or the public at large. The Petroleum Storage Surety bill would apply to crude oil stored at all bulk storage facilities in New York State and require financial security to meet all responsibilities for cleanup and decontamination costs associated with the release of such oil.

There is a heightened awareness of safety issues related to the transportation and storage of crude oil, and the Petroleum Storage Surety bill is one attempt to address the negative impacts of mishandling and improper storage of crude oil.

State funding takeover of counties' indigent legal services. I introduced legislation this spring that would provide reform recommendations to 18-b, which affects indigent defendants in the state's unified court system.

Fifty years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states must provide lawyers to those who can't afford it, and the State of New York implemented this by mandating counties to pay for these defense services but without providing the resources. A 2006 report chaired by former Chief Judge Judith Kaye labeled the state of public defense as an 'ongoing crisis.' Phasing in state funding with strict standards and oversight is the best way to meet this need and provide equal access to legal representation for all New Yorkers, thereby reducing the burden carried by Albany County and counties across the state.

Update on streetlights cost-saving legislation.

Encouraging news on my bill to enable municipalities to acquire ownership of its streetlights and upgrade them with energy efficient and cost-saving LED lighting technology – Senator Joseph Griffo (R-Utica) has agreed to sponsor this bill in the Senate.

The "Streetlight Replacement And Savings Act" is a response to NYSERDA's recent report ("Street Lighting in New York State: Opportunities and Challenges"), which stated if municipalities across the state owned and then upgraded their streetlights with LED technology, municipalities could achieve a savings of nearly \$100 million on annual street lighting costs.

As noted in a recent Syracuse Post-Standard article, the City of Yonkers is saving \$1 million since converting to LED technology, yet other Upstate cities have been unable to do so – and are burdened with the additional cost of using outdated technology.



Assemblymember

Patricia A.
Fahy

Reports to the People

Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy

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