



Assembly Member

Inez E. Dickens

Reports to the People



Summer 2018

End of Legislative Session 2018

The 2018 Albany legislative session has presented a host of legislative challenges. Some were a result of the normal quandary of Albany politics but were exacerbated by what is taking place in Washington. Recent changes to healthcare laws, education and immigration policies, and decisions by the United States Supreme Court have forced us to reimagine what are American values are? For generations, we were considered a nation of immigrants, by choice and by force, but all striving to be free to the principles established in the Declaration of Independence and protected by the Constitution, regardless of our nation's leader's willingness to defend it.

Since Congress refuses to act in defense of those who wish to have a quality education, who wish to earn a decent living wage to provide for their families, or to own a home, or even start a business, the Assembly Majority was forced to ensure those precious opportunities were not lost.

Assembly Member Inez E. Dickens is proud to announce the State Assembly has invested nearly \$1 billion in education funding, infrastructure and transportation repairs, to help offset the new federal tax changes that sought to deprive New Yorkers of their remaining income.

New York State is trying to address a sizable budget deficit which forces us to make some tough decisions and stay true to our values and commitment to our communities. Assembly Member Dickens believes "this budget gives all New Yorkers a voice. From the public school student who deserves every chance to reach for the stars, to the tenant whose quality of life has been sacrificed for far too long, to the hardworking parents struggling to put their kid through college and the family torn apart by the opioid crisis, we're here for you. It's our responsibility to look out for you and to build a better New York. This blueprint moves us forward."

INVESTING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

The 2018-2019 state budget builds on the Assembly's commitment to ensuring every New York student receives a quality education by providing an increase in Foundation Aid. Assembly Member Dickens believes "our students deserve to learn not only how to read and write, but also how to think critically and creatively. The state budget ensures every student, no matter where they live or what barriers stand in their path, has those opportunities."

To support students in our district, we were able to increase funding for high-need schools – including struggling schools, districts with large numbers of English language learners (ELLs) and districts with increasing numbers of homeless students. In addition, the budget increases the minimum community schools funding. The budget goes further to support ELLs students who face language barriers, as well as bilingual education grants for training programs to increase the number of teachers providing bilingual and multilingual education. It also invests in a second round of Empire State After School awards, providing after-school care for over 6,000 students. The funding will be directed to districts with high rates of childhood homelessness so that more children have a safe place to learn and grow outside of the classroom.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

The spending plan also restores millions to college opportunity programs, including:

- Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)
- Education Opportunity Program (EOP)
- Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK)
- Liberty Partnerships
- Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP)
- Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-STEP)
- College Discovery

PROTECTING PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The budget continues New York's commitment to local libraries, providing an increase of \$1 million over last year. Libraries not only lend books, they also offer resources ranging from adult literacy classes to job search resources and provide a community hub for everyone from the youngest children to retirees. In addition, the budget provides additional support towards library capital projects across the state.

PROTECTING NYCHA TENANTS

The budget provides \$250 million for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to make capital repairs, including replacing and updating heating equipment, as well as weatherization and other critical maintenance projects. This money is only a start to addressing the issues, noted Assembly Member Dickens.

It also allows NYCHA to use the design-build procurement process, which would expedite boiler replacements and other construction and repair projects by consolidating both the design and construction of a project into a single contract.

Eighty percent of NYCHA residents were without heat at some point between Oct. 1 and Jan. 22. This is detrimental to each resident's living conditions, health and safety and interferes with families' work and school obligations.

FIGHTING BACK AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

While every New Yorker should have a roof over their head when they go to sleep at night, the unfortunate reality is that many people across the state don't have a place they can call home and therefore must brace the unpredictable New York weather on a regular basis looking for somewhere to sleep. 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.

The state budget includes the establishment of a program in New York City and the city of Rochester 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.



PROVIDING A SAFETY NET FOR THOSE IN NEED

The state budget provides funding for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs that provide educational opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities, assist low-income residents with employment, and help strengthen families, including millions toward:

- Facilitated Enrollment to expand eligibility for child care assistance, allowing parents to stay employed while their children are cared for;
- Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking (ATTAIN) labs, which provide technology and access to education and workforce development training;
- Career Pathways, which helps train low-income young adults for jobs in high-growth sectors;
- Preventative Services to keep families together and children safe;
- ACCESS, which links educational opportunities to internships and job placements;
- Wage subsidy program, which helps develop job opportunities for recipients of public assistance and low-income individuals;
- SUNY/CUNY Child Care to address compliance issues, including background checks, training programs and inspections;
- Fatherhood Initiative, which helps fathers reconnect with their children and develop essential parenting skills; and
- Wheels for Work, which helps low-income individuals secure reliable transportation to and from work.

Assembly Member Dickens believes these programs provide critical services that give individuals access to resources to put them on the path of self-sufficiency, whether that's strengthening job-related skills or strengthening family relationships.

To help further protect individuals with disabilities, the state budget allocates funding for the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP), which provides legal representation when federal disability benefits have been denied or discontinued. In addition, the state budget will continue to provide for the Displaced Homemakers Program to help people who have been displaced from their careers as unpaid homemakers and provide services to get them back into the career field.

SUPPORTING AT-RISK YOUTH

To ensure that the children of New York State have every opportunity to succeed in life, regardless of their family's financial situation, the state budget funds programs dedicated to helping young people achieve success, including:

- Advantage After School Program, providing structured activities for kids to help them succeed academically;
- Youth Development Program;
- \$2.45 million for settlement houses, which provide educational, recreational and other social services to the community; and
- Kinship Care and Kinship Navigator which provides a support system for relative and non-relative kinship caregivers.

The state budget also provides funding for Safe Harbour to help support victims of childhood sexual abuse overcome the unspeakable trauma, as well as work toward reducing caseloads for child protective workers.

STRENGTHENING CHILD CARE FOR NEW YORK STATE

Assembly Member Dickens has stated, "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." The New York State Assembly will invest close to \$80 million to ensure safe, affordable child care, including:

- Pre-licensure and annual licensing; inspections for child care providers;
- Conducting background checks on child care providers and staff members;
- Infant and toddler care quality efforts;
- Ongoing training on health and safety programs; and
- Staffing system changes.

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

PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE

During an emergency, clear communication with law enforcement, firefighters or other first responders is critical. But for some New Yorkers, especially those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), communication can be extremely difficult and sometimes impossible. Individuals with ASD often struggle to respond to questions and make eye contact in stressful situations and may have trouble following directions, as well as have an aversion to physical contact or shared space. Assembly Member Dickens noted all of these factors can lead to misunderstandings with first responders and could further escalate an emergency. To better prepare for these situations, this year's budget includes a statewide program to train law enforcement, firefighters and other first responders for encounters with individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities.

Combating the opioid crisis, substance use disorders

To combat the opioid epidemic and create a road to recovery, the state budget makes investments in prevention, treatment and recovery services, including establishing a stewardship fund. The fund will be supported by a fee paid by manufacturers and distributors registered to sell and/or distribute opioids in the state.

The \$100 million Opioid Stewardship Fund seeks to help curb the epidemic by creating a partnership with the pharmaceutical industry to expand prevention, treatment and recovery programs for individuals with substance use disorder.

The state budget also allocates funding to address the heroin and opioid crisis, including an increase to support the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) in improving educational and

awareness campaigns, prevention, treatment and recovery programs and residential service opportunities. The funding supports a variety of treatment and prevention programs, including family support navigators, peer supports, recovery clubhouses and community coalitions.

PROTECTING AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

The budget addresses rising drug and health insurance costs so that more New Yorkers have access to the health care they need. This year's budget restores millions for pharmacy initiatives, including:

- Restoration to existing prescriber prevails provisions, which ensures patients and their doctors have the final say in choosing medication in managed care and fee-for-service plans; and
- A plan to reject the executive budget proposal to limit coverage for 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 by providing:
- Millions in health transformation capital funding;
- An increase support for enhanced safety-net facilities that provide care to large Medicaid populations;
- Funding for critical access and sole community hospitals, which provide services in rural communities.

To ensure the public health programs New Yorkers rely on can continue providing care to the communities they serve, this budget protects 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 expands programs to support individuals with Hepatitis C.

Additionally, the budget restores protection for Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) and adult day health care transportation services.

SUPPORTING SENIOR'S HEALTH AND WELL BEING

The state budget restores support for long-term care by preserving 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.

Dickens believes the decision to move a spouse to a long-term care facility is never an easy one. 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 millions in hospital and nursing home reductions, protecting hospital and nursing capital reimbursements.

Looking out for our youngest New Yorkers

The Assembly Member has continued to make sure our children don't go hungry and keep them healthy from the start. She has fought to protect our kids, especially those who are at-risk and can't afford to be left without a strong voice in their corner.

The budget provides crucial funding for children's health initiatives, including:

- Ensure that the expansion of children's mental health services is not delayed;
- Restore School Based Health Centers; and
- Restore Early Intervention programs, which provide invaluable services to children with disabilities and their families.

In 2018, Assembly Member Dickens ushered in the following legislation that seek to support and protect the rights of New Yorkers:

A6846	Directs the commissioner of labor to establish the form and content for contracts for the employment of domestic workers
A6866	Prohibits the erection or maintenance of billboards advertising alcoholic beverages within 1000 feet of schools or playgrounds
A6868A	Creates the people's history project to foster the recognition of heretofore overlooked personages, sites, and events of historical significance
A6869	Defines as aggravated harassment in the third degree photographing persons entering or leaving reproductive health care services facilities
A6872	Relates to identity theft; clarifies personal identifying information and what acts constitute the offense of identity theft
A6875	Establishes tenants' right to offset rental payments by the cost of certain emergency repairs
A6876	Provides for tuberculosis screenings outreach and services in epidemic areas and makes an appropriation therefor
A6877	Prohibits the use of live human subjects as surgical subjects as part of state dental professional licensing examination
A6878	Regulates the use of human subjects for medical research and experimentation
A6879	Provides for the allocation of monies for dental health services in the medicaid managed care program, the child health insurance program and the family health plus program
A6880A	Authorizes guidelines for granting contracts to disabled veterans eligible under the home for heroes program
A6890	Requires a public hearing for substantial change in transit authority service by the New York city transit authority
A7266	Creates the New York city transit authority safety advisory panel to study and report on safety from terrorist acts
A7271	Provides that in proceedings to review real property assessments in N.Y. city assessing method, capitalization rate, etc. must be disclosed
A7272	Provides for funding for a sound basic education
A8158	Requires public officers and bodies to provide interpreters and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired at public hearings under certain conditions
A9011	Relates to digital blocking capability
A10567	Relates to assessment of the record of performance of banking institutions in helping to meet the credit needs of local communities

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES TO CREATE GOOD JOBS

To help secure New York's economic future, the state budget invests \$1.36 billion to enable local businesses to grow and thrive and attract new businesses to the state. The funding will be distributed through the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC).

It also establishes a new Consolidated Funding Application to help businesses find and hire talented workers and expand apprenticeships, especially in growing industries like clean energy and technology. The program will also focus on efforts to improve the economic security of women, young people and other populations that face significant barriers to career advancement.

To encourage collaboration between higher education and the private sector, the state budget provides \$11.9 million in operating support for the Centers of Excellence. This will allow the 13 centers to promote further technological developments and ensure New York remains a prized destination for emerging industries. The budget also provides additional support to Technology Development Organization Matching grants.

TAX CUTS FOR MIDDLE CLASS

The budget also continues phasing in middle-class tax cuts, which are projected to save families \$4.2 billion annually by 2025. The plan reduces the state income tax rate from 6.45 to 5.5 percent for those earning between \$40,000 and \$150,000 and from 6.65 to 6 percent for those who earn between \$150,000 and \$300,000. Families will see average savings of \$250 this year and, when they're fully phased in, 6 million New Yorkers will save \$700 each year.

The budget also continues the local property tax relief credit, which will provide an average reduction of \$380 to 2.6 million taxpayers in 2018. Next year, the tax credit will offer an additional \$1.3 billion in property tax relief and save the average New Yorker \$530.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

Dickens has always championed small businesses as the cornerstone of our state's economy as they provide good-paying jobs to millions of New Yorkers. The state budget invests in critical programs that provide these vital businesses with the resources and support they need to grow and thrive. Small businesses employ more than half of all employees in the private sector, and it's critical that these economic drivers have the tools and resources they need to succeed. The 2018-19 state budget allocates for local economic development initiatives.

The budget also:

- Provides for the creation of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) /Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Technical Assistance Program to promote technological advancement and the commercialization of innovations developed through federally funded research; and
- Allocates to the Community Development Revolving Loan Fund and to support Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).

Additionally, the spending plan provides in funding for the Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) Development and Lending Program for a total of \$1 million, extends the program for a year and gives priority to recapitalizing the MWBE Investment Fund.

FUNDING THE MTA SUBWAY ACTION PLAN

Millions of New Yorkers rely on bus and subway services to get around the city, but conditions have become a nightmare. 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. And, to establish a long-term funding stream for New York City public transportation, the budget enacts a \$2.75 surcharge on for-hire vehicles, \$2.50 for yellow cabs and \$0.75 for pooled trips below 96th Street in

The Assembly Member has co-sponsored or supported the following legislation for New Yorkers:

A269	Relates to excluding income from the employment of children when calculating income for the selection of tenants
A453	Relates to a minority and women-owned business enterprise participation goal requirement in order to receive grant or appropriation money
A1532	Enacts the "safe staffing for quality care act"
A1912	Requires court to advise aliens of deportation consequences of guilty plea; allows guilty plea withdrawal
A3024	Requires police officers to notify family members in person of a relative's death in certain circumstances
A3038B	Expands the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to a companion animal during the commission of a felony
A3054	Relates to establishing a pilot program for the use of body-worn cameras on certain correction officers
A3055A	Relates to time limits for a speedy trial
A3201	Requires police officers and peace officers to issue appearance tickets to individuals charged with certain offenses instead of arresting such individuals
A3333	Repeals section 50-a of the civil rights law
A3358	Prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or expression and includes offenses regarding gender identity or expression under the hate crimes statute
A4240	Relates to prohibiting employers from seeking salary history from prospective employees and implements a state policy of a fair, non-biased compensation structure
A4297	Authorizes the correctional association to inspect residential juvenile detention facilities
A4328	Creates the health insurance guaranty fund
A4360A	Establishes new criminal discovery rules; repealer
A4395A	Relates to the closure of nursing homes
A4710A	Relates to culturally responsive teaching
A5285C	Establishes the commission on prosecutorial conduct
A5306A	Relates to claims for unjust conviction and imprisonment
A5313	Establishes the "sickle cell treatment act of 2017"; and making an appropriation therefor

Manhattan. Additionally, the plan provides funding to install no less than 50 new traffic monitoring cameras on Transit Authority buses to reduce congestion and increase safety on our roads.

ENSURING ACCESS TO LEGAL COUNSEL FOR IMMIGRANTS AND INDIGENT

The 2018-19 state budget includes the first installment of funding for a six-year plan enacted in 2017 to increase the state’s investment in public defense legal services to ensure that all New Yorkers have equal access to quality representation.

Specifically, the budget includes an increase of \$50 million for public defense services. When fully funded in 2023, the state’s investment will increase funding to counties and New York City for public defense services by approximately \$250 million annually. This investment will vastly improve the quality of public defense services and will ensure defendants have counsel at arraignment, establish new caseload standards so that attorneys can devote sufficient time and attention to each case, and ensure that attorneys receive effective training and have the necessary qualifications and experience.

The 2018-19 state budget also provides an additional \$5 million in funding for the Liberty Defense Project to provide vital legal services to immigrants. The plan also provides:

- Additional funding for civil and immigrant legal services;
- Prisoners’ Legal Services;
- Public Utility Law Project, which provides legal representation for low-income utility consumers; and
- Additional alternatives to incarceration programs.

The Assembly Member noted that while the vital criminal justice reforms she helped pass in the Assembly budget proposal were not

included in the final budget, the Assembly will continue fighting to increase fairness and equality in the system.

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 Dickens. “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.



EVENTS

January 25, 2018, In her efforts to inform residents about their rights, Assembly Member Dickens hosted a legal panel for ex-offenders and if they are eligible to have their criminal records sealed. Moderated by Judge Althea Drysdale and paneled by Judge Milton tingling, Xavier Donaldson, Ayana Steed (NY County Asst. Dist. Atty) and Seth Steed (Bronx ADA), and Katherine Wagner-Goldstein (Legal Action Center).

We were delighted to see a packed gallery of individuals who completed their debt to society and were in search of ways to move forward in the next chapter of their lives. Having a criminal record has deterred many from acquiring certain jobs, returning home in NYCHA, and prevented them from access to selective social services.

Our panel allowed guests to see there is still a future and there are ways in which people can help understand how to apply for a certificate of relief, who is eligible, and how to access additional resources. We look forward to hosting our next forum.

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