



Assemblymember

Anna Kelles

Assembly District 125

May 8, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

The budget season has finally drawn to a close, and while it took some time to negotiate the best budget possible for the state, I am happy to share a lot of exciting wins with you. We didn't get everything we asked for, but I will continue to fight for those issues we didn't secure the desired funding for yet, and they will be prioritized as budget goals in the coming years. Without further ado, here are highlights from the 2023-24 Enacted State Budget:

State Budget

I am proud to announce that three bills I wrote made it into this year's State Budget. These were: a matching grant program for small businesses ([A4507](#)), funding for an agrivoltaics research program, and funding for Volunteer Fire Departments!

Small Business Matching Grant Program (SBIR/STTR)

This will establish a matching grant program for small businesses who have been awarded funds under the federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs by increasing grant amounts to small businesses that show great potential in creating new technology. These programs will encourage the development of sustainable products and services that support and protect the environment as well as underserved populations.



Agrivoltaics Research

The budget includes \$1 million in funding to establish the Agrivoltaics Research Program at the New York State College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CAL S) at Cornell University. This program would develop science-based recommendations for the combined use of land for agriculture and solar power arrays while promoting biodiversity. Research shows that this efficient use of space increases yields of certain crops and is an excellent way to improve sustainability while transitioning to a renewable energy economy.



Volunteer Fire Department Funding

I helped to secure \$25 million in capital funding for Volunteer Fire Departments to help with facility upgrades and improvements, to ensure safety of both our residents and volunteer firefighters alike.



Budget Highlights

Improving Education & Childcare Investment

Public Schools and Pre-K

- \$34.5 billion in total School Aid
 - \$24 billion to Foundation Aid
 - Foundation Aid is a means of improving school equity across New York State, calculating the distribution of funding based on student and school district needs.
 - This \$2.7 increase from last year completes a three-year phase-in to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time in history.
- \$150 million in funding for Universal Pre-K programs

Higher Education

- No tuition increase for SUNY & CUNY!
 - The Assembly majority successfully fought to reject tuition hikes
- \$381 million in new operating aid for SUNY and CUNY campuses

Investing in Libraries and the Arts

- Includes \$34 million in capital funding for libraries

Child Care

- Expansion of income eligibility for state child care program to families earning up to 85% of State Median Income
- \$500 million for child care Workforce Recruitment and Retention Grants
- Expansion of Child Tax Credit to include families with children age 4 and under which were previously excluded from state credit
- Establishes pilot program for Employer-Supported Child Care

Critical Funding for Environmental Health

- All Electric Buildings
 - This will require all electric construction for new buildings less than seven stories beginning Dec 31, 2025
 - Notable exceptions include hospitals & commercial food establishments
 - **This law applies to new construction only**
- \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund
 - \$19 million for Environmental Justice - an increase of \$1 million
- \$500 million in clean water infrastructure funding, a \$100 million increase from last year's budget.
 - I am proud to have channeled our collective voice in playing an integral role in securing **\$25 million for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) research** as a part of this provision!
- \$200 million for the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to invest in enhancing state parks
- Establishment of the Climate Action Fund
 - This part of the Cap-and-Invest program ensures that one-third of future revenue generated from actions taken under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) will go to direct rebates for New Yorkers.
- Authorizing NY Power Authority to build NY Renewable Energy Projects
 - This is a version of the **Build Public Renewables Act** that will provide regular evaluations of how the energy industry is doing with respect to climate goals

Health and Human Services

Affordable Energy

- Support for REACH program
 - This program provides bill credits to low- and moderate-income customers in disadvantaged communities

- \$200 million to expand the Energy Affordability Program
 - This program provides income-eligible consumers with a discount on monthly electric/gas bills.

Mental Health

- \$1 billion in funding to strengthen mental health programs throughout state
 - \$890 in capital funding to create 3500 new residential units for New Yorkers with mental health disorders

Assisting Vulnerable Populations

- \$15 million to develop housing support for those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- \$55 million for Office of New Americans
- \$40 million for immigration legal services
- \$7 million for Refugee Resettlement program

Public Health

- \$18.5 million for lead abatement
- \$7.6 million to modernize Emergency Medical Services
- \$31.5 million for Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance (HPNAP), Nutritional Outreach and Education, and Double Up Food Bucks Programs
- \$8.3 million to strengthen the reproductive health system
- \$212 million for Opioid Stewardship Fund statewide harm reduction initiatives

Alleviating the Housing Crisis

- Adds \$391 Million to New York's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)
- \$40 million for the Homeowner Protection Program, assisting homeowners in default and foreclosure
- \$50 million for eviction prevention legal services
 - \$35 million for upstate only
- \$10 million allocated for 50 transitional homeless units
- \$4.3 million to establish 8 new Safe Option Support (SOS) teams for homeless people across the state

Workforce & Economic Development

- \$23.95 million in workforce development support
- Investment Tax Credit (ITC) converted to fully refundable tax credit for eligible farmers
- \$10 million for Food Access Expansion Grant Program to address food deserts
- \$56.5 million for agricultural programs, including:
 - The Agricultural Environmental Management Program
 - The New Farmers Grant Fund
 - The Farm-to-School Program
- \$324 million Cost-of-Living Adjustment increase (4%) for human services providers
- \$53 million increase in home health care workers' wages
- A minimum wage increase to \$15 on Jan, 1 2024, \$16 in 2026
 - As of Jan 1, 2027 wages would be indexed to inflation

Infrastructure & Transportation

- \$1.3 billion for reconstruction of roads & bridges
- \$306.6 million - an increase of \$20 million - for upstate transit operating assistance

Goals Moving Forward

As I mentioned above, we didn't win every budget item we worked for, and I realize how frustrating it can be for those who feel their needs are not being met. I was disappointed by the omission of a modest corporate tax increase that would have provided funding for the cost of living adjustment for healthcare workers and Medicaid reimbursement.

The end of the budget season is not the end of my work this legislative session, and I can assure you that much of the rest of the year will be spent building support and preparing to push these bills through next year, so that the budget will better reflect the needs of the people. While I celebrate the many important items that made it into this year's Enacted Budget, I've already got my eyes on the horizon for next year.

Around the District

Cortland Courthouse Groundbreaking

Last week I was honored to be present at the Cortland County Courthouse groundbreaking for the much-needed exterior renovations to the dome and

steps and the installation of a sustainable HVAC system to help make this jewel of the Crown City shine! I am proud that I was able to secure the \$4.6 million in state funds for the repairs, a critical investment so the Courthouse can shine for generations to come.



Ithaca Farmers Market 50th Anniversary Ribbon Cutting

The [Ithaca Farmers Market](#) is a bedrock of the community, and yesterday I was thrilled to celebrate their 50th anniversary! The market is essential for our farmers and the wider community, providing a communal gathering spot, serving as an incubator for small businesses, bringing economic growth and revitalization to the waterfront, and providing food security to the population. The contributions of the market are innumerable, and I was thrilled to be there to celebrate such a milestone!



State Theater of Ithaca Funding

I am overjoyed to see \$5 million in support for upstate theaters in the Alive Downtowns! program in the State Budget, including \$103,000 for The State Theatre of Ithaca! A cornerstone of culture and economic activity, the State Theatre draws tourists from surrounding areas and enriches the lives of the local population. From my days as a County Legislator, I have been fighting to protect and enhance this jewel in Downtown Ithaca. We must continue to fund and support these institutions that bring so much vitality and joy to the District, and upstate New York!



Community Resources

The Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County would like us to share some important reminders regarding healthcare coverage.

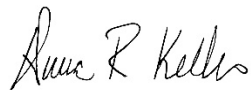
Healthcare applications on the [New York State of Health](#) (NYSOH) need to be updated by the end of June to ensure that there is no lapse in coverage. They recommend doing this between **May 15 - June 15** to leave plenty of

time in case you need assistance. Please make sure that your address is up to date on New York State of Health!

Please contact the Human Services Coalition if you are having trouble with Medicaid pharmacy changes (NYRx), or with any other questions and concerns. You can [book an online appointment](#) or call 607 273-8686, or 211.

This was an info-heavy issue and I commend you for making it through to the end! I am committed to keeping my constituents informed about my work both in Albany and in the district, and I thank you for your attention and interest. I wish you a safe and happy week!

In solidarity and health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

ALBANY OFFICE
LOB 833
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-5444

CORTLAND OFFICE
83 Main St
PO Box 5026
Cortland, NY 13045
607-208-2024

ITHACA OFFICE
106 East Court Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
607-277-8030