



Economic Development Public Hearing

As Chair of the Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Development, I held a public hearing on the impact and effectiveness of economic development programs funded in the 2025-2026 State Budget. On October 9th, my fellow committee members and I heard testimonies from state administrators, higher education leaders, and business and trade associations on the successes and opportunities for growth in this year's economic development programs.

As discussed in the Committee, the two biggest obstacles to economic development in New York State are housing and workforce development. With major investments from companies such as Micron in Central New York and Chobani in Rome on the horizon, the demand for a highly-skilled labor force is growing – as well as the demand for housing due to the projected increase in population. To meet these upcoming needs, I'm focusing on workforce development programs and their wraparound supports, such as childcare and transportation. By connecting education and experience directly with opportunity, these programs and their supporting provisions will attract and fill a high volume of in-demand positions necessary to drive economic growth.

Some highlights from the hearing on the impact of successful budget-funded programs, including workforce development initiatives, are:

- The overwhelming success of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs sponsored by MACNY, which allow students as young as middle schoolers to gain firsthand experience in the field of their choice. Often students in these programs go on to launch a career with the company they apprenticed for, creating a direct workforce development pipeline.
- The increasing enrollments of students at community colleges in high-demand fields, such as healthcare, construction, and advanced manufacturing.
- Grants totaling \$68 million have been distributed across 77 workforce development programs in high-demand fields, courtesy of Empire State Development.
- Funding for the Linked Deposit Program (LDP) has doubled from \$560 million to \$1.1 billion in this year's budget, offering businesses the opportunity to obtain commercial loans at significantly lower interest rates to expand their operations.

Communicating with leaders in the business community have revealed some major takeaways and suggestions for growth shaping economic development in New York State. What we're hearing:

- Working towards directing all small businesses towards economic development programs, rather than just businesses relating to high-demand fields, would ensure that all types of businesses have the opportunity to advance.
- Creating workforce navigators whose sole purpose is to collect longitudinal data in order to best measure success of various economic development programs over time.
- Federal funding cuts for research initiatives at universities are having a big impact, curbing new technologies that might have driven innovation – particularly in response to the increased demand for resources following the arrival of major developments like Micron and Chobani in New York State.
- Potentially utilizing AI to identify low ROI programs and highlight high ROI programs, maximizing efficiency and reducing administrative burden.
- As designing a budget with comprehensive economic development programs becomes increasingly difficult with actions at the federal level, increasing accessibility and flexibility for the number of small businesses who can access and benefit from those programs becomes crucial.

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2025



This year, **55 students** across the district took part in the New York State Assembly's 2025 Summer Reading Program! Centered around the theme, **Color Your World**, the program encouraged students to dive into good books during the summer months and discover how reading can give us new colors to see.

I heard from elementary and middle school students across **Clay, Cicero, Manlius, and Cazenovia** on how much they read this summer, as well as some favorite books they discovered.

At the end of the summer, I was happy to meet some of the summer readers from the North Syracuse Central School District in person. **Each student who read for 15 minutes per day for at least 40 days during July and August** was given a New York State Excellence in Reading Certificate from my office.

7293 Buckley Rd • North Syracuse, NY 13212
315.452.1115 • stirpea@nyassembly.gov

Long Awaited OCM BOCES Capital Project Vote Held November 19TH

Despite rapidly climbing enrollment numbers at OCM BOCES, their large-scale facility improvements have been few and far between.

In the past thirty years, OCM BOCES has not done a major capital project, consequently their Cortlandville and Thompson Road Campuses are in need of major building upgrades.

To maintain a high-quality learning environment for its students, OCM BOCES would invest in several wraparound upgrades to prevent more expensive repairs down the road. These include partial roof replacement, upgrading classrooms and labs, enhancing main entrance security, replacing inefficient windows, repairing deteriorated and outdated facilities, and updating their HVAC, electrical, and plumbing systems.



CORTLANDVILLE CAMPUS



THOMPSON RD CAMPUS

With these upgrades, OCM BOCES will be better positioned to support the growing number of Career and Technical Education (CTE) students and stay future-ready.

After voter approval and a review by the New York State Education Department, the project would take about 2-3 years to complete. While 65% of the project is covered by New York State Aid, the remaining costs will be shared proportionally by OCM BOCES's component districts with minimal impact – amounting to only a few dollars a year for individual taxpayers.

For more information on the project, tax impact by district, please visit: <https://www.ocmboces.org/capitalProject>

Recycling News

Hundreds came out for my free electronics recycling event on November 1st at East Syracuse Minoa High School. Despite the cold and rainy weather, we were able to collect over 62 tons of electronics from almost 1,500 cars who drove through the event. In partnership with Sunnking Sustainable Solutions, this event diverts an incredible amount of e-waste from our landfills and prevents heavy metals, such as cadmium, lead and mercury, from releasing toxins into the soil and groundwater. Sunnking recycles about 92% of all the materials they receive, ensuring that the refurbished materials are properly broken down and can have a second life for future use. As December quickly approaches, I am proud to host these e-recycling events to



provide the community with the opportunity to not only recycle responsibly, but to also declutter their homes in preparation for the holiday shopping season.

Celebrating 200 years of the Erie Canal



On October 6th, a full-scale replica of the Erie Canal Boat, Seneca Chief, stopped at the Brewerton River Front Park on its way to New York City. It was a midpoint stop in the 33-day Bicentennial journey to commemorate

Governor DeWitt Clinton's historic trip in 1825.

The Erie Canal tells a story of New York State at its heart: a center for progress, economic advancement and cultural exchange for 200 years.

Stretching across all corners of the state from Buffalo to New York City, no landmark encapsulates a unified New York State better than the Erie Canal.

As the Erie Canal carved its way across the state, new businesses, people, and ideas followed in its track and put our region on the map. The bicentennial voyage was not just a re-enactment, but a modern-day museum that invited the public to honor the past while envisioning the future.

A white pine tree was planted as a symbolic tribute to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy who were displaced by the growth the canal contributed to our state and the country.

I was honored to participate in the ceremony mixing Oneida River water into the barrel aboard the Seneca Chief on its way to the Hudson River in Manhattan.



The Brewster Inn Regcognized

On October 20th, at the monthly meeting of **Caz Life Business**, I presented the Brewster Inn with a certificate in recognition of their place on the Historic Business Preservation Registry.

Administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, the Registry highlights businesses that have been in operation for at least 50 years and have played an irreplaceable role in their community.



Pictured are owners: **Kirk Gibson Front-House Manager** (left), who also helps **Chef Stephen Frank** (right) and individual guests pair wines with foods. **Caitlin Gambee, Hotel Manager**, continues to oversee the Brewster's 17 rooms, directs communications and even bartends some nights.

The Inn is named after Benjamin Brewster, an American industrialist, financier, and one of the original trustees of Standard Oil. Born in 1828, Brewster established himself in San Francisco during the Gold Rush, opening a general store.



After returning east in 1874 with the fortune he amassed, Brewster married the sister of William Rockefeller's wife and became a partner in the Standard Oil Company.

In 1890, Brewster built his summer

home on the southern end of Cazenovia Lake. This expansive mansion to this day remains one of the largest homes in Cazenovia. Today the Brewster Inn houses four dining rooms, a large kitchen, and nine guest rooms. It has been a restaurant and inn for over fifty years and is iconic in the community. If you have ever visited the NYS Lorenzo Historic site on route 20 you are probably familiar with the Brewster Inn as a fine country inn catering to discerning diners and travelers.

The Brewster Inn has served as a true cornerstone for the Cazenovia community. Along with its dining and lodging accommodations, the Inn hosts major events for businesses, higher education and community organizations. When Cazenovia College was pending shutdown, the Brewster Inn served as a meeting place for community leaders to discuss a way forward.



INSPYRE INNOVATION HUB – MORE THAN JUST A BUILDING



The Grand Opening of the amazing INSPYRE Innovation Hub, on September 18th, showed what can be created when you don't compromise! Every inch of space was rented before it opened.

Formerly known as the Tech Garden, the INSPYRE Innovation Hub is now the largest business accelerator in the state. Located on Harrison Street next to the AXA Towers, the expansion transformed the previously single-story facility into a 90,000 square-foot, three-story operation for 35 resident start-ups, coworking areas, and an expanded hardware space for product development.

Additionally, INSPYRE will continue advancing the unmanned aerial systems and robotics industry through the GENIUS NY program, encouraging start-ups from around the world to compete for New York State investment, innovation, and resources.

Originally estimated at \$24 million, the plans for INSPYRE's expansion were stopped dead in the wake of COVID-19. With the world turned upside down during the pandemic and the cost of supplies skyrocketing, the once \$24 million ballooned into a hefty \$32 million price tag. Just as the Legislative Session was coming to a close in 2023, I worked with my colleagues to make up that \$8 million difference. With a \$4 million investment from the Assembly hinging on an investment of an equal amount from the Senate, we worked tirelessly during the last two weeks of Session to meet the deadline.

Now complete, the INSPYRE Innovation Hub's expansion has created a 21st century, first-class space to help many entrepreneurs make Central New York home.

As a former start-up business owner myself, I know first hand how important it is to gain access to the resources, assets and expertise to dream big and make it happen!

