WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026 11:11 A.M.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The House will come to order.

Good morning, colleagues.

This morning Guruji Dileepkumar Thankappan will offer us a prayer.

GURUJI DILEEPKUMAR THANKAPPAN: Honorable Speaker, Assemblymembers and public servants, Namaste. The divine within me bow to the same divine within you.

It is a great honor and privilege to offer an invocation at this esteemed Assembly of the New York State Legislature. I extend my gratitude to the Honorable Speaker for permitting me to chant ancient Vedic prayers. I also wish to thank Assemblyman Honorable Charles Fall and Assemblyman Honorable Nader Sayegh

for their kind invitation to deliver this invocation today.

I'll begin with the blowing of the traditional conk shell, followed by Vedic prayers in Sanskrit and the condensed English translation.

(Blowing into conk shell.)

(Chanting in Sanskrit.)

I connect with the Earth's energy and the divine light of the sun. May this light awaken our spiritual awareness. We thank (indiscernible). Like a cucumber grows (indiscernible) from its stem. I claim my freedom from (indiscernible). May everyone have well-being, peace and good fortune. May all be happy, healthy, and may no one suffer. Lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. An infinite universe comes from the infinite. May everyone be happy.

In closing, O Lord of the universe, light our New York State Assemblymembers, Governor and public servants. Grant them wisdom and compassion for all New Yorkers. Help us remember that we all deserve respect and dignity, regardless of our backgrounds. May we listen and learn from one another to promote understanding and collaboration. Begin the day with love. Spend the day with love. Fill the day with love, and end the day with love. This is the way how we connect with the divine essence of the universe. May we always be blessed by the divine. In unison we affirm, love all, serve all.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Visitors are invited to join members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Acting Speaker Hunter led visitors and members in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

A quorum being present, the Clerk will read the Journal of Tuesday, May 19th.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, I move to dispense with the further reading of the Journal of Tuesday, May the 19th and that the same stand approved.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Without objection, so ordered.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Colleagues and guests that are in the Chambers with us today, I would like to share a quote with you. Today, this one is coming from Robert Ingersoll, an American lawyer, writer and orator during the Golden Age of Free Thought. I'm not sure I know when that was. But his words for us today: "The best way to find joy is to give it to others." Again, these words from Robert Ingersoll.

Madam Speaker, we should now see if you have any housekeeping and/or introductions that need to be made at this point.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: We have no housekeeping. We do have a few introductions.

We will start with an introduction by Mr. Sayegh.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you very much, Madam

Speaker. I'd like to recognize -- it's my privilege to introduce Guruji His Holiness Dileepkumar Thankappan, a respected global spiritual leader, humanitarian who led us this morning in a very special prayer, who has worked closely with myself and many members of this Body to promote Assembly passage of annual Yoga and Meditation Day resolutions, including this year.

Guruji serves as the Global Chairman, spiritual head and principal representative of the World Yoga Community at the United Nations. He is also Secretary of the Committee of Religious NGOs, and chairs several important NGO committees at the UN, helping to advance interfaith dialogue and global respect for interfaith activities and programs.

This year's resolutions of yoga and meditation are presented through his hard work here in the Assembly and the Senate in New York State, and his work and his presence here at this Body and throughout communities in New York State is reflective in the respect many members of this Body has for Guruji. And in today's time with division and polarization, it is individuals like Guruji Thankappan who's spent his entire life working to promote dialogue and peace and coexistence.

Today it's my pleasure to acknowledge him and acknowledge his hard work on the presentation and the advancement of yoga here in New York and throughout the country. And in addition to Diwali holiday, Hindu celebrations and holy festival. And we are also sponsoring a resolution Sri Sathya Sai Baba who himself

has led the path of peaceful coexistence for centuries.

So thank you very much, and I hope we give our friend and our colleague here, Guruji, the full cordiality of this Body.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Mr. Sayegh, the Speaker and all members, welcome back, Guruji, to our Assembly Chamber, extending to you the privileges of the floor. It is always wonderful to see you, to start our morning in that fashion. We know we're gonna make it a great day today. So we thank you so very much for joining us. Namaste. Thank you.

(Applause)

Ms. Lunsford for the purpose of an introduction.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of myself, Assemblymembers Bronson, Meeks and Clark, I would like to introduce our union friends: Maria Fisher from AFSCME Council 66. Kevin Eitzmann from AFL-CIO. And Eddie Santiago, the Secretary of the New York State Professional Firefighters Association. They join us from both here in Albany and the Rochester community today to represent the family of Freddi Macek, a longtime teacher, union leader and everyone's mom. While she and her family -- obviously she could not be here today because she has passed -- her family could not be here so we send her union family to represent her. Freddi will be deeply missed. We'll be taking up a resolution to commemorate her later today.

But I would ask that you please extend the

cordialities of the floor to her union family who has come on her behalf today. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Lunsford, the Speaker and all members, welcome, Maria, Kevin and Eddie, to our Assembly Chamber, the People's House. We always love to see our union brothers and sisters here. We extend to you the privileges of the floor. Hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Ms. Woerner for the purpose of an introduction.

MS. WOERNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to interrupt our proceedings for a brief introduction of some amazing Girl Scouts from Dorothy Nolan Elementary School. It is Troop 3885 and their Troop Leader Tricia Pleu. And they are here working on their democracy badge and looking for us to demonstrate democracy in action.

So, Madam Speaker, if you will offer them the cordialities of the House, I would be most appreciative.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Ms. Woerner, the Speaker and all members, welcome, Girl Scouts, to the Assembly Chamber. We extend to you the privileges of the floor and hope you enjoy our proceedings. That means you're earning your badge today; watching democracy in action for sure. I was a Girl Scouts as well, so understand the three fingers up. Right, girls? We --

we know what it means to be participants in the citizenry for our democracy. So thank you so very much for joining us today, and continued best wishes for you all. Thank you.

(Applause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, I now move that the House stand at ease.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On Mrs. Peoples-Stokes' motion, the House stands at ease.

(Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m. the House stood at ease.)

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(Whereupon, at 12:57 p.m. the House was called back to order.)

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The House will come to order.

Ms. Lucas for the purpose of an introduction.

MS. LUCAS: Good afternoon to everyone, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the purpose of an introduction.

Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize and welcome the US Freedmen Project to the New York State Assembly for Freedom Advocacy Day. The US Freedmen Project is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to addressing the lasting impacts of slavery, systemic discrimination and economic inequities affecting the American Freedmen community. Their work focuses on

advancing equity through initiatives such as data disaggregation, the establishment of an Office of Freedmen Affairs, and the creation of an American Freedmen Commission to address longstanding disparities in wealth, housing, education, healthcare and economic opportunity. Their advocacy reminds us that understanding the full story of inequality requires intentional action, honest data and a commitment to addressing the historical harm that continues to affect communities today. I am proud to work closely with this organization and support the important work they are doing to uplift communities across New York State.

Please join me in welcoming the US Freedmen Project to the Assembly Chamber, and please afford the cordialities of the floor to them. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Lucas, the Speaker and all members, we welcome members of the Freedmen Project here today to our Assembly Chamber, extending to you the privileges of the floor. Hoping you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you for celebrating Freedom Advocacy Day, and wishing you all the best for your day. Thank you so very much for joining us.

(Applause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, if we can maybe have colleagues' attention for just a few moments. We have a pretty busy agenda in front of us for the remainder of today,

and I respectfully request the cooperation of my colleagues here. I'm saying that the members have on their desks A-Calendar, and I now move to advance that A-Calendar.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On Mrs. Peoples-Stokes' motion, the A-Calendar is advanced.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you. Our principal work for the day is gonna be taking up a budget bill that is on the A-Calendar. Members should also be aware that there's gonna be a number of committees that will need to be called off the floor today: Aging, Insurance, Tourism, Transportation, Environmental Conservation, and Housing and Codes. Majority members should also be aware that there may be a need for a conference once we conclude our floor work today. And as always, Madam Speaker, we'll check with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to determine what their needs may be.

That is, however, a general outline of where we're going today, and again, I appreciate everyone's cooperation as we move forward. Madam Speaker, let us begin by calling the Aging Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. Aging Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room. Aging Committee members, please make your way quietly to the Speaker's Conference Room. We are going to be on debate. Take your seats. Take your conversations out.

Page 3, Rules Report No. 137, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A10006-C, Rules Report No. 137, Budget Bill. An act to amend the Education Law, in relation to Contracts for Excellence, Foundation Aid, the homeless and foster count, renewable energy projects, zero-emission school buses, and to apportioning aid for universal prekindergarten; to amend Chapter 91 of the Laws of 2002 amending the Education Law and other laws relating to reorganization of the New York City School Construction Authority, Board of Education and community boards, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; to amend Chapter 345 of the Laws of 2009 amending the Education Law and other laws relating to the New York City Board of Education, chancellor, community councils, and community superintendents, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; to amend the Education Law, in relation to the apportionment of moneys for school aid; to amend Chapter 756 of the Laws of 1992 relating to funding a program for workforce education conducted by the Consortium for Worker Education in New York City, in relation to reimbursement for the 2026-2027 school year and the maximum contract hours, withholding a portion of Employment Preparation Education Aid, and the effectiveness thereof; to amend the Education Law, in relation to the use of apportionments for the EXCEL program; to amend Part I of Chapter 61 of the Laws of 2006 amending the Education Law and the Public Authorities Law relating to expanding our children's education and learning, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; to amend the Education Law, in relation to

maximum class sizes for special classes for certain students with disabilities; to amend Chapter 82 of the Laws of 1995 amending the Education Law and other laws relating to State aid to school districts and the appropriation of funds for the support of government, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; providing for special apportionment for salary expenses; providing for special apportionment for public pension accruals; to amend Chapter 121 of the Laws of 1996 authorizing the Roosevelt Union Free School District to finance deficits by the issuance of serial bonds, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; providing for set-asides from the State funds which certain districts are receiving from the total Foundation Aid; providing for support of public libraries; and to repeal certain provisions of the Education Law relating to the Statewide Universal Full-Day Prekindergarten program (Part A); to amend the Education Law, in relation to evidence-based mathematics instruction (Part B); to amend the Education Law, in relation to eligibility for the New York Opportunity Promise Scholarship (Part C); intentionally omitted (Part D); to amend the Education Law, in relation to tuition rates of non-resident undergraduate and graduate students at the State University of New York and City University of New York (Part E); to amend the Education Law, in relation to early childhood educator eligibility for the Masters-in-Education Teacher Incentive Scholarship program (Part F); to amend the State Finance Law, in relation to the New York State Music Grant Fund (Part G); intentionally omitted (Part H); intentionally omitted (Part I); intentionally omitted (Part J);

to amend Part N of Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2020 amending the Social Services Law relating to restructuring financing for residential school placements, in relation to the effectiveness thereof (Part K); to amend the Social Services Law, in relation to increasing the standards of monthly need for aged, blind and disabled persons living in the community (Part L); to utilize reserves in the Mortgage Insurance Fund for various housing purposes (Part M); to amend the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law, in relation to the maximum number of land banks that can simultaneously exist in New York State (Part N); to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to authorizing a tax abatement for alterations and improvements to multiple dwellings for purposes of preserving habitability in affordable housing (Part O); to amend the Penal Law, in relation to the aggravated harassment of a rent-regulated tenant (Part P); to amend the Executive Law, in relation to renumbering the disparate impact standard for housing and employment in the Human Rights Law (Part Q); and to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to eligible multiple dwellings under the Affordable New York Housing Program (Part R).

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Governor's Message is at the desk. The Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: I hereby certify to an immediate vote. Kathy Hochul, Governor.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested.

Mr. Pretlow.

MR. PRETLOW: Absolutely. After many weeks of hard work, today we begin the process of adopting a budget for the State fiscal year '26-'27. The bill before us contains major components of legislation that are necessary to implement the State Budget as it pertains to Education, Labor and Family Assistance. This includes legislation related to school aid, higher education programs and housing programs.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, Madam Speaker. Will the Chairman yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the Chair yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Chair yields.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you, Mr. Pretlow. It's good to talk to you again.

MR. PRETLOW: You, too, Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: So here we are, our first budget bill since March when we did the Budget Deficit Bill -- Debt Service Bill. So now that we're here, is the metal dropping? Where are we at?

MR. PRETLOW: We're in the first inning.

MR. PALMESANO: We're in the first inning.

MR. PRETLOW: This is a nine-inning game and this is the first inning.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. I will -- and -- and --

I know I mentioned this to you last -- when we had some conversations. Unfortunately, last year I couldn't be here during the budget, so I couldn't -- I was on Zoom, so I couldn't participate in the debates. And I say, you know, I saved this Chamber two-and-a-half hours of debate time. So unfortunately, I don't think you're gonna get that lucky this year with me, but I do have some questions if I might be able to start off. And I know we talked about this in Committee and I know -- I think I know what the answers are but I need to get some of these on the record. So this is our first budget bill.

MR. PRETLOW: The second.

MR. PALMESANO: And -- yeah, first budget bill in a long time. How about that?

MR. PRETLOW: That -- that's okay. I'll go with that.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. And we don't have the financial plan.

MR. PRETLOW: Correct.

MR. PALMESANO: As I said in Committee, can you tell us when the Legislature and the public will finally see this document?

MR. PRETLOW: We're feverishly working on the financial plan right now. The information contained in this bill, affectionately known as ELFA, will be part of that financial plan. But as for the final numbers, I do not have that in front of me.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And as we begin

passing these bills without the financial plan, you know, when the Governor announced her agreement she stated that we're looking at an All-Funds around $268 billion, which is around $14 billion more than last year's enacted budget. Has anything changed from that announcement as far as what that dollar amount is looking at?

MR. PRETLOW: I think we had this conversation last week, and I said that is an estimated number. I wouldn't go to the bank with it. It will be somewhere in the neighborhood of between 262- and 266-, somewhere there.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And since Governor Hochul took office, the spending of -- this budget has increased over $60 billion. And since one-party control took over, we're spending nearly $100 billion more on a budget. Is this amount of funding -- is this amount of spending level sustainable for us, for New York?

MR. PRETLOW: At -- at the current rate, yes. What's happening now is we're spending more on the important things for the people of the State of New York such as education, which we'll go over today. I mean, just this budget includes an increase of $494 million more than what the Governor proposed in her original budget. So when budgets are rising, they're rising for the good.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. If I could just pivot to State operating funds to get on -- to get on the record. How -- do you know how this compares to last year's closeout and the Governor's Executive proposal? Any numbers you could share with us on that?

MR. PRETLOW: That's still being worked on.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And, you know, our Conference has long advocated a spending cap just to ensure responsible budgeting. Do you think enacting a spending cap would help make sure we're controlling spending in a proper way to protect the taxpayers of this State?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it's always our ambition and our goal to protect the taxpayers of the State. But we do have to take care of the finances of the State. And quite frankly, New York is in the forefront of many different areas that cost money. And that's one of the reasons that it's expensive to live in the State of New York. But I would arguably say this is the best place in the entire United States to live.

MR. PALMESANO: Sure. I -- I can appreciate that. And then obviously we know people are struggling. We always hear about inflation rate. But when we look at what we're spending here in New York, that seems like we consistently outpace inflation and the ability of the taxpayers to pay. How can we justify spending more than the rate of inflation and what the taxpayers are able to pay? How would you say -- how would you reconcile that?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it's not about reconciling, it's about maintaining a higher quality of life than most of the people that you're referring to.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. The fiscal year '27 [sic] enacted budget spends significantly more than what the Governor proposed in the Executive Budget. Can you detail this additional

money and how it's going to be spent, or is that something to be determined?

MR. PRETLOW: That's being determined.

MR. PALMESANO: Do you know how much money is being dedicated for New York City with the -- the bailout issue --

(Indiscernible/crosstalk)

MR. PRETLOW: We had this discussion earlier with the extenders. It's not really a bailout. It's giving New York City the authority to utilize the City powers that they need -- they require us to give them permission to do to raise money on their own.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And I know we talked about it and we haven't got to the revenue portion. But just from a -- help painting that picture, does this budget include any broad -- broad-based tax increases for the temporary extension of tax rates that were supposed to expire?

MR. PRETLOW: Not in this bill, no.

MR. PALMESANO: No extension of temporary rates?

MR. PRETLOW: Not in this bill.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. Not in this bill. But we might see that in a later bill; is that possible?

MR. PRETLOW: You may see it in a later bill, but definitely not in this bill.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. And so I guess that

would just apply to the same question about New York City then.

When the Governor took office there were no outyear budget gaps projected, and as of the last financial plan update it shows that our State faces a cumulative outyear gap of over 30 billion. Do we know what those projected outyear gaps are for the next four years yet? Do you have those that you could share?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, first of all, I think that there were outyear gaps when the Governor's original... but I am not sure. I have notes in front of me, but I -- I don't have (indiscernible) right now. Sorry.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. And how do -- do we know, maybe on that question if you have it, if not, how do these outyear -- how do these gaps compare to the 30 billion cumulative deficit estimated in the Executive Budget?

MR. PRETLOW: They'll be similar.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And do you think the spending levels that we're continuing to spend are contributing to these very high outyear budget gaps?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, you know, we're really legally required to present a balanced budget every year, and there will continue to be balanced budgets.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. I'd like to pivot a little bit more, if I could. Relative to education, which I know we're talking about, which -- and the reason I wanna ask these questions, you know, on the financial plan is because, you know, education is one of the

biggest spending aspects of the budget. We're looking at probably nearly $40 billion for education, correct?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And with the changes made to Foundation Aid from the Governor's proposal, do we know how many districts will be receiving the minimum 2 percent Foundation Aid increase next year?

MR. PRETLOW: I don't know how many districts will, but I know that every district will receive at least a 2 percent increase.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And we know that school districts are facing insurance -- rising insurance, transportation, and special -- special education cost increases well above general inflation. The federal government projects enrollments will continue to decline, and -- which spreads out these fixed costs among fewer students. What is the -- as far as the formula that we're working with, doesn't that leave districts to address these growing cost pressures largely through program cuts, consolidated school buildings and for higher property tax pay -- taxes with -- if we're not adjust -- adjusting the formula to meet some of these needs?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, the formula is being adjusted. We just changed the English learning proposal. We increased it by .6 percent. You know, even though the class sizes are -- are shrinking, the fixed costs aren't. School buildings are still there. They require the same amount of heat to provide for the buildings, so

we have to maintain that. So it costs a little bit more per child to educate as the enrollment goes down.

MR. PALMESANO: And -- and Mr. Pretlow, you know, I've talked and we've talked about, you know, I'd love for you to come visit my area. If you ever did, you'd see I'm from a very rural area, and one of the areas where the Foundation Aid formula is sparsely factored. It's really the only component of the Foundation Aid formula that addresses rural and low-density costs and concerns, but yet that was not updated in this budget agreement on education, correct?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, there's been no changes to that.

MR. PALMESANO: No changes.

MR. PRETLOW: None at all.

MR. PALMESANO: So obviously you can recognize how that's a concern to school districts in my area that I represent or people who represent rural, smaller school districts with lower density. So that's something that -- a concern I think that when we see some changes being made to the Foundation Aid that it might benefit Downstate, more urban areas versus, you know, Upstate rural areas not getting the same opportunity.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, each section of the State has different requirements. Upstate has higher transportation requirements because the space between students and schools is much, you know, farther than Downstate. If you take my district, which is

highly urban, the schools -- no school is more than a mile-and-a-half away from any student in -- in my city because the city is only four square miles with 70,000 people. So like I said, the differences are there, but we're accounting for that by giving higher Building Aid in certain areas where the expenses are higher, higher transportation aid where the transportation needs are greater.

MR. PALMESANO: Sure. One more question on Foundation Aid and then I'm gonna pivot to another topic, if I may. But on that, you know, because the Rockefeller Report from 2024 contained nearly 30 recommendations on how to reform and improve -- improve the Foundation Aid formula. In the two years since the report released, we've only implemented two of those reforms. What has changed about our educational system that has made it important to study the formula for two years -- since two years ago but prevents us from implementing some of these recommendations into the final budget that address some of those concerns that are out, like -- like the rural schools that I talked about?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, I -- I know the Rockefeller Report was -- was long-awaited and there were several recommendations that they made. But, you know, the formula is extremely complicated. It's based on many factors and trying to do the best for all the residents of the State of New York. Yes, it is taking time for us to implement any more of them. Maybe more will be implemented next year or the year after. But the fact is that the report was done. We have a template in front of us from which we

can draw from. And it's up to the Executive, quite frankly, to determine which of those suggestions that he or she -- well, in this case she -- wants to do with the advice from the Regents who we placed in there. So we, we the Legislature, put the Regents in charge of education, and then they will look at -- or they're looking at what was suggested by the Rockefeller Report and will make suggestions to the Governor for, in this case her, to put in her Executive Budget.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. Thank you, Mr. Pretlow.

I want to talk about the provisions about the zero-emission school buses for -- it's my understanding this delays from 2027 to 2032 when they have to start buying zero-emission buses (indiscernible/crosstalk).

MR. PRETLOW: We changed the requirement. We pushed it back five years which gives the school districts and the providers, you know, the school bus companies, has an extra five years in which to purchase buses. We're still trying to eliminate emissions from school buses --

MR. PALMESANO: Sure.

MR. PRETLOW: And because of the cost involved and various other things that have happened in -- with our economy, we decided to move it back five years.

MR. PALMESANO: I think this is needed. Certainly I'd like to see more done on that. I'd like to see us let the State of New York convert it first. But given the fact that you

mentioned that an electric school bus is about $300,000 more than the traditional bus. And that's before you get into the charging infrastructure, the electrical infrastructure, improvements that need to be made. How do we reconcile ceding that the timeline must slow with refusing to address the underlying conditions that made the delay necessary in the first place? Costs, utility infrastructure, improvements to charging infrastructure. I mean, the timeline's moving but the -- we're not really looking at what the problem is and how to address that.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, how I see this is that this additional five years gives us five years to improve that infrastructure. You know, these -- these buses come with a lot of -- I'll use the term "unintended consequences." We have to shore up our roads in many cases because these buses are a lot heavier than the diesel buses, which will cause more road deterioration.

MR. PALMESANO: I -- that -- that's a very good point.

MR. PRETLOW: I'm not 100 percent sure whether the battery capacity is going to be good enough for our northern-most districts like the Buffalo area where it's usually pretty cold, or where you are where it's pretty, pretty cold. And we all know that the temperature does affect the effectiveness of -- of batteries. So, you know, buses -- we have -- the infrastructure, as far as I'm concerned, is being worked on.

MR. PALMESANO: Yeah, that's gonna be a

challenge, especially the weight. We can talk about that on another bill later.

Relative to -- you know, right now there's a waiver process in place. On the waiver -- for those schools that have waiver applications in and getting to that 2032 deadline, will there be a waiver process in place for that 2032 deadline? And what happens -- will that continue, that they can file waivers in 2032? And for those schools that have waivers in now, will they just be automatically extended?

MR. PRETLOW: Okay, well we have to really look at how this waiver process is going to be implemented. This is something that we came up with late -- later in the -- in the process.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. I'd like to talk a little bit about Universal Pre-K for a moment. No, actually, let me go back to zero cost -- the zero-emission. Don't you think now that we have this five-year timeframe in place, we've heard from the school superintendents saying that they don't have -- they don't have the -- the cost. We've heard about the infrastructure. Wouldn't it be a wise idea for us -- why we -- when we delay this to say, Okay, let's have a cost-benefit analysis -- let SED do a cost-benefit analysis of the school districts to see how it's gonna cost, what the transition is. How about a feasibility analysis with the NYISO, with the PSC, with the utilities, so we can make sure the utility infrastructure can handle it? Wouldn't that be an ideal thing to do with this, rather than just say, you've do this over again without addressing some of those concerns, the costs

and the infrastructure that needs to be addressed to make this work?

MR. PRETLOW: Are you saying that the school superintendents should be doing this? Are you saying that we mandate that we do it?

MR. PALMESANO: Well, I -- I would think SED, we should just -- you know, I -- I -- we had a bill of mine in Committee that got turned down, and what it would require is a full cost-benefit analysis by SED to see what it's gonna cost; a full feasibility analysis with utilities, with the NYISO, with the PSC, to see how the infrastructure can be done; and also a safety analysis on fire safety, things like that. Shouldn't we -- since we're doing this delay, wouldn't it be smart now to get some of those data so we can plan going ahead, going forward instead of just saying now you got to do it. And I think that's been the problem with how this has -- has all operated in the first place.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it's -- it's is my belief that SED is doing this. They do it every year, they check the progress or how the process is working.

MR. PALMESANO: Yeah, I know. And I know that as we've heard from the school districts it's very, very problematic for them. So I just wish -- I think we should be looking at some of those. We have time in this five years to do this cost-benefit analysis. We should lead on that so we can know what it's gonna cost, because right now they just -- the costs continue to go up. We need to make sure the grid can handle it because we know there's shortages with the grid

reliability and problems with that that need to be addressed.

One question on UPK. I know this bill requires every district to offer a full four-day, four-year-old pre-K to all interested students by the '28-'29 school year.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: And it does also increase the minimum reimbursement rate to $10,000 per student. But in meetings throughout this budget cycle, districts have been telling us the real concern ain't with this policy, it's just really lack of classroom space and certified staff. What -- what is the justification, really, for imposing a hard '28-'29 deadline while really providing no waiver, no structured phase-in, no off-ramp for districts that really can meet this new change?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, there -- there are provisions in -- in the law where school districts do not have to use their school buildings to facilitate the 4K requirement. So most districts do have an -- an off-ramp, so-to-speak, where they can provide young people with their kindergarten needs.

MR. PALMESANO: And -- and the certified staff as well?

(Pause)

Oh, I'm sorry -- and I -- and the certified staff as well? Because that was one of the other concerns as far as the certified staff on that being a problem.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, that falls -- certified staff can

be hired using the additional monies that we're providing per student.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. I know this bill -- one more on UPK, if I could. Does this bill also cover New York City's 3K program for the next year while not providing any additional funding to expand 3K programs outside the City? Can you tell us why New York City's 3K program is being prioritized in this budget when rising child care costs are affecting all families across the State and not just in New York City?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, New York City 3K is really not being prioritized. I think what you're looking at or -- or confusing the fact that we did not increase the dollar amount per child. New York City, with its own funds, has been increasing the slots for 3K, but they're getting the same money as other districts are getting 4K. They're just spreading it out more and using more of their own money.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And one question on special education and then I'll probably go on the bill.

The State Con -- State Comptroller calls the authority to retain a fund balance prudent management, and the 4201 schools have formally requested it. This budget does not include it. Is there any reason for denying these schools for the blind, deaf and severely disabled? There's two that the Comptroller recommends, and nearly every other public entity has. Why did we not include that provision in this budget to provide assistance to these 4201 schools?

MR. PRETLOW: You'd have to ask the Executive that. I'm not sure why we haven't included that.

MR. PALMESANO: So that wasn't something we tried to negotiate with them moving forward?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, I mean, every -- every year we -- we fight for our -- our 4201 schools and 4102 [sic] schools.

MR. PALMESANO: Mr. Pretlow, thank you so much for your time. I know you got a busy day ahead of you and a busy few -- well, (indiscernible) we're gonna go to the next week. We'll see, as we always do.

But Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: One moment, Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Sure.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, please call the Insurance Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. Insurance Committee members, please make your way to the Speaker's Conference Room. Insurance Committee members, Speaker's Conference Room.

Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you my colleagues, thank you, Chairman Pretlow. I appreciate our discussion and our dialogue and our back-and-forth, and I appreciate your candor and doing what you can to answer the

questions.

My colleagues, finally, May 20th, our first budget bill since the Debt Service Bill. What do we know, what don't we know? What we know, we're looking at a budget bill of nearly $270 billion, give or take. More than a quarter-of-a-trillion dollars. My colleagues, that's a lot of zeroes. A quarter-of-a-trillion dollars worth of zeroes. Like I said, a lot of zeroes.

What else do we know? Since the Governor took office, this budget has gone up over $60 billion. Since one-party control has taken up -- happened in this State, the -- the budget has gone up nearly $100 billion. This is the largest budget ever. It's the latest State Budget since 2010, the longest in modern-day history.

What else do we know? We've done 14 -- well, soon-to-be 14 extenders; the most under this Governor. It's not a history we should be proud of. But what are we looking at? We still have no financial plan. Here we are, voting on education budget that's about $40 billion worth of funding that's going to go into that and we don't have the details on anything. No details on what tax increases are gonna be a part of this, who's impacted by it. Because we have not seen language. We've seen reports. We've seen things on social media. But no language. We don't know what the outyear budget gaps are gonna be. When we -- you know, like I said, when we asked -- we're gonna talk about $40 billion for this budget. We need this critical and financial information to make sound decisions for the people we represent. And that being taken away from us, not being

provided, is very, very problematic.

Of course when I look at this bill, and when you spend a quarter-of-a-trillion dollars, there's gonna be some good things in it. But there are things in this bill that our Conference has advocated for and will continue to advocate for. Certainly, when the Governor came out with the proposal for a 1 percent increase, our Conference saying it has to be -- at least go back to where it was and more. We need to make adjustments to the -- to the formula. Some were made, some weren't. We were glad and we're happy to push that message going forward. But just with that, we have waiting factors where the rural areas are not addressed like some of the Downstate areas.

The EV school bus mandate. That's something we've talked about on this floor time and time again; many members of our Conference, myself and others. You know, we said when this was passed this was problematic. We knew it was gonna be a problem. I don't want to say we told you so, but we're seeing it happening now. We have to pause it. Our school districts actually said, *We're glad someone is listening to pause it.* You know, we're pumping the brakes, but we really should be slamming the brakes. But it still just feels bizarre that we still have to convert -- our schools districts are gonna have to convert their fleets by 2040 along with the State of New York. How about the State of New York look to do it first? And also, really, if you wanted to have common sense with this issue, we have a five-year window. Let's do a cost-benefit analysis. Let's -- so those

school districts know exactly what it's gonna cost each other, the property taxpayers, because this is significant. There's a lot of changes that are happening. They're gonna (indiscernible). So let's do the feasibility study on top of it. Because we know there's challenges to the grid. We know what the utilities are saying. We know what the NYISOs are saying. We have to do a feasibility study. That would be the ideal thing to see what the grid can handle, what improvements need to be made. We're talking about billions of dollars in replacement costs, billions of dollars in infrastructure and energy infrastructure and for charging infrastructure. We got to look at the safety, the procurement of it. You know, where the materials are made. They should be sourced in the U.S., which would ensure that the batteries that are gonna be powering these electric vehicles aren't using cobalt that are made from child labor from the kids from the Congo. And how ironic is that view? Our kids riding on a bus that is made by child labor in the Congo for cobalt to make these batteries.

And yes, we had a school -- we're looking for the school aid (indiscernible). Yes -- so yes, there was a -- there was school aid increase, the EV delay. Some of our members I'm sure will be voting for this bill because of those types of things because we've advocated for it and that makes sense. But some may vote no. And not because we do not support those things; we've been advocating for those things for a very, very long time. But the -- the reasons for the no votes are gonna be because we can do better and we should do better. We should have a financial plan in front of us before we're

considering a nearly quarter-of-a-trillion dollar budget and doing it bill by bill, and education having such a financial impact on it. We should know the details of what the whole financial picture is before we start voting on budget bills. We should know how much we're spending in total, and All-Funds. What we're spending in total in State operating funds. We should know what the tax increases are gonna be, who they're gonna impact. If they're extensions we need to know that. We -- we don't know because we have not seen any language, and that's a problem. We need to know what those outyear budget gaps are, because our excessive spending has helped cause and create those outyear budget gaps. We the -- we -- the people we represent, the families, the businesses deserve to know how these things are gonna be implemented and impacted. And that's important. Now it would be good to do these things and have that financial plan in front of us for transparency and accountability.

I will remind us, my colleagues, as we finalize this several things: One, we have a spending problem in this State, not a revenue problem. Number two, our families and businesses are facing challenging times. There's an affordability and quality of life crisis that they're facing right now. They're making difficult decisions right now. Rising utility costs. Policies, taxes and regulations that make it difficult to do business here, challenging the business environment. They need and want relief right now. Not look to providing bailouts to others. Just -- let's do for -- let's give them the clarity they need.

And I will remind you, my colleagues, as I often say

as we embark on passing a budget of more than a quarter-of-a- trillion dollars, please, please remember, this is not your money. This is the people's money that we represent. These are the people that sent us here to represent their interests and protect them. And unfortunately, it seems like we disappoint them over and over again.

So let's hope as we get to the next budget bills we get that financial plan sooner rather than later so we can make -- our Conference, we can make informed decisions on the financial plan and have that when we're looking at it from a bigger perspective. Hopefully that will be coming forward very, very soon. So hoping to keep -- you know, these things going forward, as we move forward. And always remember that you'll have challenges and concerns across this State from our families, from our seniors, from our veterans, from our disabled. From our small businesses, our manufacturers. They're looking for us to represent their interests and make smart decisions, and it helps when we have all the information to make those decisions. So -- because they entrust us to act on their behalf.

So from my perspective, Madam Speaker, I'm gonna be voting in the negative on this. I support the -- some of the issues. Like I said, you know, the -- getting the increase in school aid, the delay of the electric school bus mandate. We should do more with that. But I'm gonna be voting no because I think we deserve to have a full financial plan before you embark on a budget that's more than a quarter-of-a-trillion dollars. The people we represent, the families, the small businesses, the farmers, they deserve that and they deserve

nothing less than full transparency and accountability.

So again, I appreciate my time talking to the Chairman. I look forward to our future discussions. But for now I will be voting in the negative on this bill, and I think you'll see a balance of that for the reasons I tried to lay out here. And thank you, Madam Speaker and my colleagues, for your time. I appreciate it.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Slater.

MR. SLATER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield for a few questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. SLATER: Thank you very much, Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity just for some clarifying issues.

I'm gonna start with this particular bill on land banks. I apologize to the staff; they're gonna be scurrying around a little bit.

MR. PRETLOW: Okay.

MR. SLATER: On the land banks, right now the number of permitted land banks is being expanded in this bill to 45; is that correct?

MR. PRETLOW: I believe so.

MR. SLATER: So how many land banks current -- currently exist in New York?

(Conferencing)

MR. PRETLOW: Thirty-one.

MR. SLATER: Thirty-one. And can you -- for those who may not know, can you explain to us what a land bank is and what it looks to accomplish?

(Conferencing)

MR. PRETLOW: Pardon? I'm sorry.

MR. SLATER: Can you explain what a land bank is?

MR. PRETLOW: It's an organization (indiscernible) --

(Pause)

Okay, it's an organization that's put together to take over distressed properties and bring it back -- put it back on the tax rolls.

MR. SLATER: Fantastic. Seems like a -- a pretty worthy cause.

How many municipalities do we know of that are looking to create new land banks that don't currently have the ability to do so?

MR. PRETLOW: I don't have that in front of me.

MR. SLATER: And do we know what the process is if -- if a municipality wants to bring a land bank into their community how they would go about doing that?

MR. PRETLOW: I would imagine it's done through the -- the city or town councils. The local -- local legislators.

MR. SLATER: So it would just be a home rule -- would it require authorization from the New York State Legislature?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. SLATER: Understood. Thank you.

And so when we're looking at expanding it, you said -- I'm sorry, you said it was 30 -- was it 31 you said?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. SLATER: So 45? So is the assumption, then, that we have more municipalities that are looking to bring these land banks into their communities?

MR. PRETLOW: We'd like the opportunity to be there for everyone.

MR. SLATER: But now after the 40 -- the number of 45, though, that doesn't include, obviously, every municipality, does it? Or is it done by organization?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it does not include every municipality. No, sir.

MR. SLATER: So it would only be 45 identified municipalities in the State of New York that would be allowed to have a land bank?

MR. PRETLOW: Not that they'd be allowed, but those are the ones that have made a prior application.

MR. SLATER: Understood. Thank you very much. I -- I appreciate that.

Previously, the Executive's budget removed two

appropriations for land banks. Will this year's enacted budget restore the total $50 million in appropriations to support these endeavors?

MR. PRETLOW: We're hopeful that that happens.

MR. SLATER: We may see that in a future budget bill?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. SLATER: Thank you very much.

I'd like to pivot, if I can, to the J-51 reforms that are in this bill. The enacted budget includes a provision to reauthorize and reform New York City's J-51 Real Property Tax Abatement program; is that correct?

MR. PRETLOW: Right. Yes.

MR. SLATER: How will a 100 percent -- a 100 percent abatement compared to the existing 70 percent rate affect these rehabilitations compared to the existing program?

MR. PRETLOW: Give me one second.

(Conferencing)

Seventy percent -- up to 70 percent.

MR. SLATER: Up to 70 -- up to 70 percent.

MR. PRETLOW: Yup.

MR. SLATER: The Senate one-House proposal for J-51 would have expanded to apply to buildings where more than 90 percent of units are rent-stabilized. Why wasn't that included in the enacted budget?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, I can't speak for what was in

the Senate one-House; I can only speak for what's in the enacted budget. But obviously, through negotiations with the Governor, this is what we came up with.

MR. SLATER: Understood. For rental buildings this only covers a limited subset; limited profit housing companies and those getting substantial government assistance. So that involves subsidies already being provided, and now we are adding a tax abatement as well. For those properties that have gotten no assistance and are on -- and are, on average, in a significant deficit based on the amount of rent-stabilized units, can they apply to this program to get the needed upgrades to their buildings?

MR. PRETLOW: I believe so, yes.

MR. SLATER: Fantastic. And in regards to the City Council, does the reauthorization and reforms require City Council approval?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. SLATER: And in the past has it also required City Council approval?

MR. PRETLOW: Always.

MR. SLATER: And how had that process gone? Has there been a delay in implementation from the City Council?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it depends on the City Council. And not being a member of that esteemed Body I can't really speak to that.

MR. SLATER: I understand. I think -- it's my

understanding that previously, it took them quite a while to finally approve the previous J-51 reforms and reauthorization; is that a fair statement?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. SLATER: Thank you very much. All right.

I'd like to pivot, if I can again, to some child -- child care questions.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, you can pivot but there's really no child care in this bill.

MR. SLATER: Well, that's what I was gonna ask. Is there --

(Laughter)

MR. PRETLOW: (Indiscernible/crosstalk) no pause --

MR. SLATER: Even though we're dealing with Human Services, I see that there were some child care provisions that were -- and I just love the phrase and so I will use it -- intentionally omitted. Is that fair and accurate?

MR. PRETLOW: Yeah, we'll find out -- we'll see that somewhere else.

MR. SLATER: We'll see that somewhere else. Okay.

Can I just ask, despite the fact that it's not detailed in this particular bill, does this bill speak to anything related to the CCAP program?

MR. PRETLOW: I don't believe so.

MR. SLATER: And can we possibly see any additional funding for the CCAP program in a future bill?

MR. PRETLOW: We could possibly see anything.

MR. SLATER: Okay. All right.

MR. PRETLOW: Not that we will, but we could possibly see anything.

MR. SLATER: So in the -- in the realm of child care, is the State's Child Care Task Force still in existence?

MR. PRETLOW: I'm not sure. Technically, yes.

MR. SLATER: And I think that obviously, you know, when we look at child care we're trying to figure out ways to reduce the burdens on child care providers. Do you know if they've -- if the Task Force has provided any recommendations?

MR. PRETLOW: I -- I think we're trying to lift the burdens on parents than child care providers.

MR. SLATER: Well, so you can have more child care providers to help parents with their kids.

MR. PRETLOW: Right. Yes.

MR. SLATER: Do we know if the Child Care Task Force has provided any recommendations as to ways that we may be able to reduce (indiscernible/crosstalk) --

MR. PRETLOW: I'm not sure. There's nothing in this bill that pertains to that.

MR. SLATER: Okay. And so just to make sure I'm

-- I'm clear, there's nothing in this bill that relates to ratios of staff to children?

MR. PRETLOW: No.

MR. SLATER: And nothing in regards to regulations, like governing the physical space of a child care facility?

MR. PRETLOW: No.

MR. SLATER: And I've seen some recommendations about potentially having, you know, essentially a -- an ombudsman within OCFS to help navigate regulations and settle disputes between the agency and child care providers. Anything that speaks to that?

MR. PRETLOW: No, nothing here.

MR. SLATER: Okay. Well, I hope that we can -- we may see that later on in another bill as we go through this process. Mr. Chairman, always appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

MR. PRETLOW: Mr. Slater, thank you.

MR. SLATER: I'd like to go just quickly on the bill, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. SLATER: You know, I hear from my school districts quite frequently about our State aid. Obviously they just voted on Tuesday on their proposed budget. But the other thing I hear a lot about is the EV school bus mandate. Every town that I represent has passed resolutions opposing the EV school bus mandate, and -- either opposing it outright or requesting a -- a delay, and I'm very

pleased to see the five-year delay here as well. Personally, I would like to see more flexibility. I think this is a massive unfunded mandate that I can tell you from one of my school districts they have estimated the cost to be 40 -- between $42- and $47 million. Just for one school district. That is massive. That is absolutely massive. And so the fact that we're here postponing it for five years I think is -- is a step in the right direction, and -- and I want to recognize that and thank my colleagues for helping us get to this point. But I do think that there's more that needs to be done. Allowing for school districts to opt out of this mandate I think is a great step, if not scrapping it all together. The finances just don't work. It's clear in the studies that have been done by our school districts. They are already, as we know through the budget votes that we saw just this week, they are being pressed in so many different ways. And adding a $47.8 million mandate, just again, on my one school district, on my home school district, would push us to the limit.

And so I will be supporting the fact that we are delaying this for five years, but I do hope and encourage us to continue to have these conversations so that we can find other ways that we can either support our school districts, provide them the flexibility that they need in regard to this particular mandate or scrap it all together.

So again, I thank everyone for their attention. Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will Chair Pretlow please yield for just a couple of questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Does the Chair yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Chair yields.

MS. WALSH: A couple -- I'm not saying two. There might be more than two.

MR. PRETLOW: Few.

MS. WALSH: But -- we will start with that. Thank you.

First thing I'd like to talk about are the universal pre-K changes.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MS. WALSH: So I saw that by the 2028-2029 school year, all school districts must serve a full day pre-kindergarten program to all four-year -- four-year-old students whose parent or guardian applies to enroll in such program.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, yeah, they have to offer it, they don't have to provide it. If -- if they offer it, they will provide it. But they don't -- they're not forced to provide it. I should say the parents don't have to --

MS. WALSH: So the parents don't have to put their children in it unless they wanted to, right?

MR. PRETLOW: Right.

MS. WALSH: Okay. All right. So my question is, will there -- is there anything in this section of the budget or will we see anything later that will offer any kind of a grace period or opt-out to school districts to not have to offer that by 2028 and 2029?

MR. PRETLOW: Not right now.

MS. WALSH: Okay. All right. As far as New York City -- and I apologize if you've already answered this question, but I saw that this section also provides funding for additional 3K seats in New York City for the 2026-2027 school year. How much money is going to be provided to New York City for that?

MR. PRETLOW: I think that the bulk of that money is being provided by New York City itself, as I explained earlier. I think I explained it earlier.

MS. WALSH: You did.

MR. PRETLOW: We're not -- we're not increasing the dollar amount, we're just -- New York City used -- uses the funds that we give them to stretch it out using their own resources.

MS. WALSH: Okay. So is it accurate, then -- I did hear you say that, but then I didn't know if it meant that there was a combination of State money plus New York City money. I saw you say that New York City was providing even the lion's share of it.

MR. PRETLOW: The answer to your question, Ms. Walsh, is $205 million.

MS. WALSH: $205 million from the State.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MS. WALSH: Very good. Thank you so much. And let's see.

I was -- will say I was very glad to see in Part F the expansion of the Master's in Education Teacher Incentive Scholarship to early childhood educators. I was very happy to see that. I've heard from a number of constituents that they really care about expanding high-quality Universal Pre-K with certified educators, and I do think that this measure is going to help. So I do appreciate that.

As far as questions for you, I think that that's it, and at this point I'll just go on the bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Pretlow.

MR. PRETLOW: Thank you, Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MS. WALSH: So the reason I was asking about Universal Pre-K changes and whether there would possibly be any grace period or opt-out for schools is that in my 112th Assembly District I represent Shenendehowa Central School District, which is -- which is a big school district. I don't know if it's big by, like, Long Island standards, Downstate standards. But in my neck of the woods it's a big school district. We have about 9,500 students, something like that. So this fall, Shenendehowa will, I think, will be the last school in the State to do full-day kindergarten. And it was a very heavy lift. It wasn't that they didn't want to do it. It was that they had

some significant issues with space considerations, staffing, transportation. They had a lot that they had to deal with being a school district of this size. They were able to do it. They're going to be do it -- doing it. They're offering it, and we're very excited to see it happen. But now to know that right on the heels of that, by 2028 and '29 they will then have to be offering the four-year-olds the option of pre-K is -- is gonna be another huge lift. And I just think that -- I think that there needs to be some type of conversation or grace or opt-out for a school district like that that it may just need additional time, as they did to be able to provide kindergarten. So I'll be interested to see moving forward, and I would certainly want to advocate for some flexibility to be given to a school district like this that is trying, you know, really trying to meet the demand and trying to meet the requirements but may need some additional time.

And -- and actually, that idea of grace and a delay and flexibility will roll me -- no pun intended -- right into the zero-emission school bus mandate delay. I was very glad to see the five-year delay. I know that it was hard-fought. I know that there were some members here that really did see the problem and really worked hard to try to get that into this bill, and I'm grateful for it. I don't like -- I mean, honestly, and I've made it very clear on the floor as I've spoken. I don't like the mandate at all. But I think that what's going to allow me to support this bill today is the fact that there is going to be the delay. Do I think it's everything that I want? No. But I think that the delay is going to be very important.

I thought it would be interesting to share -- since we did just have school budget votes yesterday -- just a snippet from my district of how those budget votes went down. In Galway that I represent, a lot of -- well, let me preface it by saying that there were a number of school districts that I represent, and maybe yours did, too, that broke out on their budget proposals separately an EV bus and then another proposal where they had some diesel buses on the proposal, and here's how it worked out. In Galway, the EV bus proposal failed, but the diesel bus proposal passed. In Ballston Spa, the EV bus proposal passed by only 65 votes, but the diesel proposal passed by over 600 votes. In Scotia-Glenville, the EV bus proposal passed by only 21 votes, but the diesel proposal passed by over 600 votes. Broadalbin, a more rural area of my district, didn't even include an EV bus proposal in their budget, just a diesel proposal. I mean, I think that that data that I'm sharing with you really just underscores and reinforces that voters understand the difficulties that having an EV bus fleet really poses in more rural, colder areas. And they know that the -- the expense and the expected use is really unrealistic. And they know, and it was discussed previously, what the -- the implications are going to be on the bus garages, on the retooling, the retraining of people to -- mechanics to work on these buses. The -- the range. All of the things that we've talked about so many times in this Chamber. I think the voters are getting it and they're saying -- they understand the -- the two-and-a-half to three times greater expense that an EV bus represents versus a high-efficiency diesel bus. So that's starting to

show up at the polls. I -- I'm glad that -- I -- I -- in my district that I didn't have any school bus -- or I'm sorry, school budget votes that entirely went down, but these certain proposals having to do with EVs did. And I think we have more work to do in this area moving forward, and I look forward to working with my colleagues.

I'm glad that we have given ourselves and the whole topic a little bit of grace by giving an additional five years for -- on the purchase mandate from 2027, moving it to 2032, and the five-year delay on full implementation from 2035 to 2040. It sounds like it's a long ways away, but we know that it's not. So I look forward to continuing to work on this issue.

I already mentioned about the -- there are definitely positive things in the budget, but I did really want to say that that Master's in Education Teacher Incentive Scholarship for early childhood ed is, I think, very important and I was -- I'm very happy to support that.

So I think that all -- all things together, I mean, the big picture -- I was a little surprised when we were just briefed on the bill maybe, what is it, maybe two hours ago when we were first briefed on the bill in our Conference, it's kind of -- you know, it's a little thin. It's a little -- it's a little skinny, I think, this part of the budget. We're gonna see, and I -- I heard that from previous questioning that under Parts H, I and J the -- we anticipate that some of those un -- intentionally omitted sections may be coming back in another part of the budget. So I'll look forward to being able to

discuss those there.

But as far as this education funding goes, I will support it. I think that when you consider that the current U.S. inflation rate is around 3.8 percent, I think that the increase in Foundation Aid to 3.9 percent is -- is appropriate to just keep up with inflationary trends. And a school aid increase of 1.7 billion, or 4.5 percent, is kind of in that ballpark of just our inflation rate. So I think that, you know, as far as whether this degree of spending continues to be sustainable, we shall have to see. But I think it is -- it sounds reasonable to me.

So I'll be voting yes on this budget bill, and I look forward to the next eight -- eight that are gonna be coming along. So I'll be up on this, and thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Smullen.

MR. SMULLEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the sponsor yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. SMULLEN: Well, thank you, Chair. I wanted to just dig a little bit deeper into the issue of electric school buses. This is the number one issue in many of the rural districts of Upstate. And the five year delay in this program, I -- I really want the -- the

people to know, how -- how did we get to five years to delay this?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, first of all, Mr. Smullen, I think it's the number one issue in every school district because of the costs. And there are different issues that affect Downstate as to Upstate, as I stated earlier. We came to five years because we're committed as a State for climate reductions, or climate change reductions, if that's a phrase that's useable. And we did an ambitious bond issue several years ago, and we're doing what's called, you know, CLCPA, which is the climate laws that we put into place two years ago, three years ago. And because of various economic and political and other issues, we've had to delay a lot of the implementation of the climate laws that we had previously passed.

MR. SMULLEN: So, how --

MR. PRETLOW: So it was deemed that five years was a sufficient time to push it back to give the school districts the time to more prepare -- they've already had several years -- this is to give them more time to prepare. And I'm not sure about most Upstate communities, but I know that most Downstate school districts, they don't have their own school bus systems. They -- they go to companies that provide school bus training. What's been happening now is these providers of school transportation have been baking into their transportation costs the cost of replacing these school buses within that five-year window. Now they can stretch that out and -- in the current window. Now they can stretch it out an additional five years, which will lower the transportation costs for a lot of the districts

that don't have their own school buses, but go to school bus transportation providers.

MR. SMULLEN: So I -- I appreciate you admitting that this is going to raise the cost for Upstate schools.

MR. PRETLOW: Oh, absolutely. It's gonna raise the costs for -- for New Yorkers. But is the -- the cost too high for clean air?

MR. SMULLEN: Say that again?

MR. PRETLOW: Is -- is that cost too high for clean air?

MR. SMULLEN: Well, that cost is certainly too high for the prop -- the property taxpayers in the school districts that I represent because we -- we don't have the money for it. How much money has the State allocated so far to aid in transportation aid and climate bond act aid in trying to get the Federal EPA aid in the previous administration to bankroll this -- this unfunded mandate on all of our schools?

MR. PRETLOW: I think -- I believe last year it was $1 billion, and it's -- it's higher -- I'm sorry, 100 million and it's going up again this year.

MR. SMULLEN: So -- so we've blown a lot of money on this, and so far we haven't really got very far. How much carbon has been saved so far? Don't you think that that's the measure that we -- that we ought to have, an exact number each year as to how much carbon we're saving?

MR. PRETLOW: Though I wish I was, I'm not an expert on climate.

MR. SMULLEN: Well, I -- I really appreciate that.

Now, in -- in terms of looking at this mandate going forward, if it's delayed for five years, have any of the provisions of the actual mandate itself been changed?

MR. PRETLOW: Just the dates.

MR. SMULLEN: Just the dates. So what we're doing is we're delaying something that's not technologically feasible. Is it going to be technologically feasible to make and deploy these buses and actually know how much carbon we're gonna save in five years?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, it is technologically feasible. It may not be affordable right now, but it is feasible to do. And if we would put our minds to it and made other sacrifices, we -- we could do it. We felt that it was in the best interest of all parties concerned that we would stretch this out over a number of years.

MR. SMULLEN: Now in terms of electricity rates. What do you predict that the average cost of electricity per kilowatt hour in New York will be that will then have to be fulfilled by this delayed five-year electric school bus mandate?

MR. PRETLOW: I can't speak to the electric market.

MR. SMULLEN: But isn't that important? Won't the costs have risen so much that any savings would be obviated by the increase in electricity costs?

MR. PRETLOW: Possibly.

MR. SMULLEN: Possibly. Well, thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

Madam Speaker, may I go on the bill, please?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. SMULLEN: You know, this five-year delay sounds like a good idea. But delaying bad policy by five years is never a good idea. And, in fact, in the dense areas where there are no school buses, where children ride the subway or ride the MTA -- which they want to be made free, right -- are all those buses electric yet? Are all those trains electric yet? The answer is no, they're not. But, indeed, what we're trying to do here is to make Upstate residents pay for climate goals that don't fit the region in which they live. The electric school bus mandate is supposed to add somewhere between $8- and $50 billion to the transportation costs for Upstate schools. That doesn't add a single dollar to an educational program. At a time when our budget is now $270 billion, over a quarter-of-a-trillion dollars and rising, we're saying we should add more money to something that's being done perfectly well by existing technology; by new technology that's unproven, that's unreliable, unsuited to the areas where I live. Electric school buses in the Adirondack Mountains is a ridiculous proposition. And even a five year delay of saying, *Well, we'll just push this down -- this can, kick it down the road for five years* isn't good enough.

Let's let common sense truly prevail here. This

climate mandate is unsuited to Upstate New York. It should be repealed. If it can't be repealed outright, then school districts, each of their own choice with a local board voting, should be able to opt out of that mandate. Where they can say, *No. No, we don't have the money to pay two or three times as much for an electric bus as we do for a diesel bus. No, we don't have the money to spend on upgrading electrical infrastructure for a grid that can't even handle it. And no, we don't have to sock it to our local taxpayers with an unfunded mandate dominated by Downstate Democrats for something we don't need. To spend money that we don't have on education on something we don't need on a technology that is not suited to our school district*s.

For that reason I'll be voting no on this bill and I'll be voting no on this budget. When our local citizens get to decide what's right for the communities, then we can talk. Until then, this delay is unacceptable. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Could you please call the Tourism Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Tourism Committee members, please make your way to the Speaker's Conference Room. Tourism Committee members, Speaker's Conference Room.

Mr. Pirozzolo.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. How are you today?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Wonderful, thank you.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Will the Chairman please yield for questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the Chair yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Chair yields.

MR. PIROZZOLO: How are you, Mr. Pretlow?

MR. PRETLOW: I'm well. And yourself?

MR. PIROZZOLO: Good. North Atlantic Islander here again from the forgotten island of Staten Island.

MR. PRETLOW: The Island of Staten, yes.

MR. PIROZZOLO: The forgotten borough.

So listen, I don't wanna say that I'm a slow learner here, but I just want to give you a compliment as far as, as you spend time in the Chamber up here year after year you get to learn the intricacies of people's roles and what they do and -- and the balance. And I think you're very good and pretty good at what you do, so I want to say thank you, you know, for your service. So I appreciate it.

MR. PRETLOW: Thank you.

MR. PIROZZOLO: My questions are gonna be basically about the New York City school budget, and I realize that maybe we don't direct how they spend that money. But we kind of give it to them and we do put certain categories on it. So if you have

any information you could shed any light on it, I would certainly appreciate that.

MR. PRETLOW: I think total school aid for --

MR. PIROZZOLO: I'm not asking what the budget is, I'm just gonna --

MR. PRETLOW: Oh, okay.

MR. PIROZZOLO: -- I'll just make a couple of comments on a couple of things I see. But I will ask, do you know what the enrollment is right now of New York City schools?

MR. PRETLOW: I know it's half of the State's pop -- population of schools. It's close to a million.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Would 850,000 be approximately right-ish?

MR. PRETLOW: That's close to a million.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Yeah, it is. It is. But I'd rather have $1 million than $850,000.

MR. PRETLOW: I take either one, to tell you the truth, at this point.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So when I first came into this Chamber or just before, the enrollment was 1.3 million.

MR. PRETLOW: School districts are -- are population -- pupil populations are shrinking Statewide.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay.

MR. PRETLOW: People are having less children.

MR. PIROZZOLO: That's exactly my point. The

population is shrinking Statewide, but our budget is increasing Statewide by very large numbers.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PIROZZOLO: And I'm concerned about that. And when I talk about accountability through this conversation, I'm not talking about accountability for individual teachers or groups of teachers or anything like that. Because as I've come to learn, teachers have a very, very difficult job, and the situations that they're given sometimes may be unfair to give to a person in a job. So I'm not talking about them. I'm talking about the accountability of the New York City School system, and really of us as we give them that money. So I'm gonna ask you a couple of questions, if you don't mind.

MR. PRETLOW: I'm ready.

MR. PIROZZOLO: All right. So, one of the things that I see that we're doing is we're delaying the class size mandate, $508 million. Now, I think that's kind of unusual because we're supposed to reduce class size by hiring more teachers, yet we can't seem to hire more teachers. And as I alluded to yesterday, there may be a few reasons, or at least two reasons we can't hire more teachers -- and I'll get to the question -- is that there are just no teachers to hire. And if we are able to hire them, we have no place to put them. We don't have the build -- you know, the buildings. We literally have to put two teachers in a classroom and cut it in half and say the teacher ratio has changed. So when it comes to some of the programs that we

have, the UPK for three-year-olds, I understand that was rolled out. Some of them are in existing schools. But we opened up a lot of community-based organizations that handle that program. This year we have the New York City 2-Care. By the way, the forgotten borough hasn't gotten any of that. We don't have any New York City 2-Care programs. But I'm gonna to bring up the question of where are we going to put these students? We're pretty much only gonna have to rely on community-based organizations, and when we do that we've seen across the country that there have been instances of fraud, misspending of money. Are we, as the State, the fiduciary responsibility -- is our fiduciary responsibility saying that, *This is how you have to spend the money*? Or, *We want an accountability on how you're spending that money?* Because we're taking children and we're not putting them into government care through a public school. We're putting them in private care. So is there any sort of accountability measure relating to this?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, I'm pretty sure that they are well-vetted before the City utilizes any of their services. And I know that they would be subject to the Inspector General's investigation as well as the Attorney General, the same thing, if anything nefarious has been happening to -- to any of our young people.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So that's true on a financial level. But, you know, there are cases -- and I don't really want to bring up all the cases -- but there have been cases where students have actually died in the care of these people because they were participating in

nefarious businesses related to drug activity. So that might not necessarily be something covered by all of the agencies that you listed. But just in general, is there any sort of a checklist that they're going to have to say, *This is how we're spending the money*, or are we just giving them a blank check with a little bit of guidance?

MR. PRETLOW: I think that falls under the purview of the -- the mayoral administration or -- or the school system in itself. The Chancellor of the New York City School District.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Right. That's exactly what I said before. But I do think since we are the principal Body here for the fiduciary responsibility of how money is spent, we should put some strings onto that. So I think that would really be pretty good.

When we're talking about bailouts, whether it's a bailout or not, one of the things I see that was in the Executive Budget was a school aid increase of $625,737,112, okay? In addition, when we come to the enacted budget, there is an increase of $150 million. So that is additional money that's kind of going to the schools, and I'm gonna get back to my original question of, how is that money being spent? We have it here just as additional negotiated school aid. Is there any tag on responsibility to that money?

MR. PRETLOW: I'm -- I'm sorry. I don't know what money you're -- you're referring to. Is this Foundation Aid?

MR. PIROZZOLO: Education and school aid. Yeah. That's what I have it listed as.

MR. PRETLOW: Foundation Aid. Okay. I have to

look -- look at that because there are several lines in the -- in the formula. So --

MR. PIROZZOLO: Exactly the problem. Too many lines, that's -- that's where I'm going.

MR. PRETLOW: That's the comp -- complicatedness and -- of -- in the difficulty in changing the formula because it is extremely complicated, the way it's put together.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I -- I get it, but there's no -- so I'll give you an example, all right? If I go a few lines down there's a topic area of "other actions." We are providing $361 million for other actions, but under proposal my list says "Unknown." Under description, my list says "Unknown." So where is this $361 million going? Because "Unknown" is -- it's absolutely a bailout or a cash bailout or even if we're allowing the City not spend money somewhere, where's the accountability for this $361 million?

MR. PRETLOW: I -- this is in the school aid school runs? Because I can't find it. I'm trying to find what you're referring to.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I'm gonna say yes.

MR. PRETLOW: I'm -- I'm looking at the school runs. I don't --

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So you know what? I'll back away and say maybe that's not an educational thing, but it is in the enacted budget. But because it's unknown, unrelated to the school thing, is any of that $361 million going to be spent on school aid?

MR. PRETLOW: I -- I'm sorry, sir. I can't -- I don't know what this money is that you're referring to. If it's in the school runs, yes, it will be spent on school aid --

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay.

MR. PRETLOW: -- and will be part of what we give -- or what we'd send to New York City.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I -- I'm gonna (indiscernible) a little bit of leeway there because I don't know it's directly for school aid. But my question again was, what I have listed as $361 million for unknown proposals, the question to tie it to the school aid is any of that money going to be spent on Foundation Aid? I - I accept your answer for that, and I expect the next question is gonna be somewhat similar.

There is a new tax going in the City, and I want to know if that's going to be coming into Foundation Aid, how that tax money is going to be spent, and that's the pied-à-terre tax of $500 million. We're gonna be raising another $500 million. Is any of that coming into Foundation Aid?

MR. PRETLOW: First of all, that's not in this bill.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I know it's not.

MR. PRETLOW: And that will be money that will come out of the City's overall -- overall budget.

Now, I'm looking at total aid to New York City, and it's -- and it's 537 million. And I don't know where you're getting 300 million from someplace else. I'm -- I'm still back on your previous

question. I don't know.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Well, when I -- when I have the opportunity to get further clarification I will come over to you --

MR. PRETLOW: Please do.

MR. PIROZZOLO: --- maybe later in the day. I mean, I see you in the elevator all the time. I hope Sam is doing all right and, you know --

MR. PRETLOW: Sam's fine.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. Let me just see what else I may have here. So basically what I'm trying to say is that, you know, we've seen pupil enrollment decrease significantly by almost half-a-million, yet we're constantly raising the school budget. I can't say that in New York City -- I'm not saying that we're doing a bad job, but I think we can do so much of a better job. There are so many lives we are saving through education in New York City, but there are definitely a lot of cracks. And I think that as the State legislative Body, our responsibility and accountability really falls on us. I don't think it would be enough to say, Okay, we're gonna give you this many billions of dollars, and we're gonna even increase the billions of dollars we give you because you say you need it, without showing why you need it or how each dollar is gonna be spent. You know, the reduc -- the increase in individual school aid for New York City has gone to about $44,000 a student, I think. Are you aware of that?

MR. PRETLOW: I'm not sure what the number is. I know the number is high. It's higher than most districts in the country.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So the question begs to be asked, is it higher because there are a few students? A few students and that same money goes in the pot and you're just dividing it by fewer so you could get an increase? Or is it higher because we're just sending more money down there? So, you know, that's a bit of a curiosity to me.

But anyway. I'm not really saying that there's fraud in the system. But what bothers me the most is that I cannot say that there is no fraud in the system. And that relies upon the State to set those guidelines. So in this budget I would like to know if we are doing any sort of accountability measures that you may be aware of. Would it be too late to get them in there? Can we include that in another budget somewhere, in overall omnibus on State spending or City spending for anything we give them?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, we -- we do have certain entities within the State that have oversight over this; the Inspector General, as I mentioned earlier, as well as the Attorney General. And if there's any -- any hint of -- of fraud they will go in, just like we have an Inspector General for Medicaid, and people that are trying to rip off the system. And yes, there are fraudsters all over the State, all over this country. And we do have people that are in place to try to weed that out.

MR. PIROZZOLO: That's true, but that really wasn't the question I asked. The question I was referring to was not of fraud that's being found out about. Are we requiring accountability on the money that we are sending? Not, *Oops, we found out something*

might be wrong over there. Let's go take a look.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, there is accountability always required for any money that's given. Reports have to be submitted on a timely basis. They -- they're open -- they're also open to random audits of -- of their operation. We don't just give people money and turn our backs and say, *Do what you want to do with it*. (Indiscernible/crosstalk)

MR. PIROZZOLO: Do you know the last time the New York City School System was hit with a random audit?

MR. PRETLOW: The last time they had one, I -- I don't know.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Yeah. Had they ever had one? (Indiscernible/crosstalk).

MR. PRETLOW: That I -- that I don't know.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I do think that kind of accountability falls on us, right, if you're going to say that.

And then the last thing I want to do is talk about the electric school bus mandate before, and I'm gonna link this to the electric school bus mandate when I ask this question because you made the comment of that what is the cost of clean air, right?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PIROZZOLO: What -- what did you mean by that?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, is it -- is it costing too much in dollars to have clean air, which arguably keeps us all alive.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So when you say clean air, where do you mean clean air?

MR. PRETLOW: New York City, New York State.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So the reason I ask that question is because batteries have to be charged with electricity, and electricity is charged that comes from, for the most part, fossil burning plants.

MR. PRETLOW: Well, see, that's part of the problem, and one of the reasons that we had to push this back because there was a movement afoot to improve or increase the number of solar and wind electric-generating plants. But somebody took the money away from that -- I won't mention his name -- and we don't have the money to produce the electricity non-fossilly [sic], and we have to push things back to make up the difference.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I can't tell you how much I enjoy the fact that you went there to solar and wind. Can you tell me of any solar and wind projects anywhere that have closed down a fossil fuel-burning energy plant?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, first of all, that's not part of this bill. Secondly --

MR. PIROZZOLO: But hold on. But you kind of related it to -- I'm kind of getting there.

MR. PRETLOW: Me personally, no, I cannot tell you of any solar panel that was shut down or any -- any wind-generating fan that has shut down a fossil-burning fuel producer.

MR. PIROZZOLO: That's kind of what I thought.

I'm -- I'm going with the clean air anywhere for school buses. What we're doing is we might be making our air cleaner, maybe. But globally we're just polluting somebody else's air at the moment. So I'm kind of very concerned when we tout that as we're doing an altruistic thing by making the air cleaner, but globally we're not. We're just poisoning somebody else. That's how I kind of take that when -- when people make those comments. I don't mean anything personal about it, but that's kind of the reality.

Thank you so much for your questions, sir. I truly appreciate it. And as I said, I do think you are good at what you do.

MR. PRETLOW: Thank you, sir.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Madam Speaker, if I may, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So I think the biggest thing that I was really talking about here is that as the State legislative Body, accountability and responsibility falls pretty much only on us. And when I say accountability, like I said, I don't mean test scores or anything like that. I mean accountability on how the money is spent. And as Mr. Pretlow kindly pointed out, there are many agencies throughout the State that would check on accountability or responsibility if there is a complaint filed. But I'm saying that as the main legislative Body, over the past few years and this particular budget with this huge bailout where money is going to the City and we don't even know for what purpose, are we putting any checks and

balances as a legislative agency? We certainly have the right to do so. There's no one who can say we cannot do that. And we're talking about billions of dollars going down to New York City, which is kind of what I want; I am a -- a North Atlantic Islander, right? We're talking about billions of dollars going down there, and we don't know if that money is being spent wisely. We don't know if it's being appropriated properly. As an Islander I can tell you I don't think it is.

So I do think that we need to do a much, much better job as the State Legislature for how and where we spend the money and how and where it is spent.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, if you could please call the Transportation Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Transportation Committee members, please make your way to the Speaker's Conference Room. Transportation Committee members, Speaker's Conference Room.

Mr. Jensen.

MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the Chairman yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the Chair yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Anything for Mr. Jensen.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Chair yields.

MR. JENSEN: Thank you. You're -- you're very sweet, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. Yes, sweet. It was very nice of him to say.

I wanna start with my questions, and I know that our Ranker on Ways and Means touched on this at the beginning of this debate, but I wanna ask about the Universal Pre-K changes. Certainly, from my reading of the legislation that this would begin -- this mandate would be in place for the beginning of the '26-'27 school year?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Some of the districts that I represent have spoken to me about a concern they have about being able to abide, despite their willingness, with this type of mandate within the school district themselves because of space, functionality concerns. They don't -- they're -- they're worried about being actually able to have the space to educate these -- these UPK students.

I understand that in the school run, there -- every district's getting building aid. There's reimbursable aid. But was there any ability for the increase that's being included for reimbursement for UPK where districts in advance of enrolling these students could use this increase in funds for capital needs as they prepare the hard infrastructure in the school environment for these kids?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, I think what we're looking at

is -- is like $10,000 per student, and that doesn't go basically into the classroom. That could be used to create the classroom, also. But they do get building aid that also qualifies. So if a school had to build an addition to its -- its current building, they could use some of those dollars to do that building. But that's -- it's reimbursable.

MR. JENSEN: So they would have -- with the reimbursable increase, they would have the ability to use it for either operational aid --

MR. PRETLOW: It would be better served if they'd use a capital approach --

MR. JENSEN: Yup.

MR. PRETLOW: -- and won't have to bond and use the 10,000 per student for expenses.

MR. JENSEN: Because that's, you know, one of the concerns we have because the mandate is for next year, budget votes were yesterday. And so in -- in efforts to make sure that they're prepared for September of next year --

MR. PRETLOW: But -- but first of all, it's -- it not next year. It's for '28-'29.

MR. JENSEN: '28-'29? Okay.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Thank you very much for your answers on that question.

Moving on to the Back-to-Basics Math provision. My understanding is that by next September, September of '27,

districts would have to certify with the Commissioner of SED that their math curriculum would abide by this Back-to-Basics math. Do we have any idea, or is there any language in this provision about how the Commissioner will determine which Back -- Back-to-Basics curriculum changes would be in place?

MR. PRETLOW: This -- the -- the best practices have to be -- have to be used, and the districts then annually have to review their K through 5 math curriculum for realignment, and this should be done by September 1, 2027.

MR. JENSEN: So when -- is the idea that it's going to be a one-size-fits-all Back-to-Basics math approach across the State, or are local school districts gonna have guardrails in which they can create a curriculum that abides by the larger goal of --

MR. PRETLOW: It's not gonna be a one-size-fits-all. There will be some guidelines provided.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. And is this for grades -- it's only through grades K through 5? Not all the way up through middle school and --

MR. PRETLOW: It's K through 5.

MR. JENSEN: So it's -- it's only gonna be for elementary students?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: What was the -- and I'm guessing that -- I think it was in last year's budget we did a Back to the Basics literacy provision that was similar?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: What's the reasoning for only having it through K through 5 instead of extending through all grades where math is a required subject and not a class (indiscernible/crosstalk) --

MR. PRETLOW: This is what State Ed had come up with. This is what they had asked for. That's why that's here.

MR. JENSEN: State Ed asked for it to be limited to K through 5?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your answers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Bailey.

MS. BAILEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would the Chair please yield for a couple -- one question, actually? It might turn into two.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MS. BAILEY: It is my district's favorite topic. It's going to have to do with EV buses. And specifically on page 8, right around line 8 it talks about the subdivision that's changing where we're extending it out to 2032.

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MS. BAILEY: So my question is I did not see any language in here and I'm hoping you can clarify this for me. If it is in there, I missed it. Under subdivision 4, last year we had indicated that schools, you know, could do an additional two-year extension. So basically, an additional out 48 months. Did any language change to that in this budget?

MR. PRETLOW: They'll still be allowed to apply for waivers.

MS. BAILEY: So in 3032 [sic] as we're approaching that date, schools still have the ability to apply for the waiver for the two -- up to 24 months so --

MR. PRETLOW: That's how we're contemplating it at this time, yes.

MS. BAILEY: Okay. So we continue to kick that can down the road a little bit?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MS. BAILEY: So it's the five-year but technically it could be nine years for schools?

MR. PRETLOW: It could be.

MS. BAILEY: All right. Thank you very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote has been requested.

Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Republican Conference will be in the negative on this -- on this budget bill, but there will be probably some exceptions, myself included. And those exceptions can be noted at members' desks at this time.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Majority Conference will generally be in the affirmative on this bill. If you would like to cast a vote in the negative you may do so at your own risk at your desk.

Have a great day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Braunstein to explain his vote.

MR. BRAUNSTEIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker, to explain my vote. I am voting in favor of this budget bill in particular because of the improvements and enhancements it makes to the J-51 program. The J-51 program allows eligible buildings, particularly co-ops and condos in my district, to get a property tax abatement for capital improvements. This new J-51 program increases the -- the -- the threshold to qualify for the program from a

45,000 assessed value to 60,000 assessed value, and then increases the assessed value every year to go with an increase in the CPI.

Just to give you an example, in the district I represent, a study by an advocacy -- a co-op advocacy organization, estimates that this new program will allow 151 properties in my district covering 4,200 units to now qualify for the program. The program now will allow eligible buildings to get 100 percent abatement for their capital improvements, up from 70 percent of the old program. And the program will also allow eligible buildings to recover fees associated with the program that in the past have been excessive and burdensome.

So this change to the J-51 program is a significant benefit to the district I represent. The co-ops in my district are primarily middle-class families. I would argue this is the affordable housing in my area of Queens. And I am voting in the affirmative because of the significant impact this will have on improving their ability to afford housing. So I vote in the affirmative.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Braunstein in the affirmative.

Mr. Wieder to explain his vote.

MR. WIEDER: Madam Speaker, I rise today with a simple rhetorical question. What would happen in the private sector if a CEO managed the highest operating budget in the industry, delivered disappointing results, and then received nearly a 50 percent, 50 percent salary increase? The shareholders would demand

accountability. And yet, here in New York, we are preparing to approve nearly $30 billion in education funding while too many parents and taxpayers are still asking, *Where are the results?*

Now let me be clear. I will be voting yes on this budget bill, but I do so with great reservations. New York already spends more per pupil than almost every other state in the United States of America. Yet we continue to see chronic absenteeism, uneven reading and math scores, and growing frustration from families across this beautiful State. At some point, at some point accountability must matter. While student performance continues to struggle, the State education leadership received nearly a 50 percent salary increase, over $150,000. If we are investing at historic levels, then leadership must also be expected to deliver measurable improvement.

I support this budget because our students deserve opportunities and strong schools. But funding alone cannot be the measure of success. Results matter. Accountability matters. And the children of New York State deserve excellence.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Wieder in the affirmative.

Mr. Steck to explain his vote.

MR. STECK: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Budgets involve compromise for sure. However, I'm elected not only on the line of a political party, but to represent a

district. I promised that I would never again vote for pre-kindergarten programs in parts of the State that are not available to my constituents. Young families in my district should not have to pay 15- to $20,000 for private pre-K when others are getting it for free. Even with enhancements to pre-K reimbursement, approximately 50% of my constituents will be denied public pre-K. The promise that in 2028 it will be provided is not convincing. We cannot bind future legislatures and the future state of the nation and the economy at that time is hardly clear. I do however, greatly and deeply appreciate the enhancements and aid to all our local municipalities. So I will be voting for the Aid to Localities Bill, but I vote in the negative on this bill.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Steck in the negative.

Mr. McDonald to explain his vote.

MR. MCDONALD: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and it is a pleasure now to be moving on and -- and voting on these various budget bills and I will be supporting this legislation for a couple key different reasons. As was mentioned by some of my colleagues, the UPK funding that is included in this budget. As one who has represented cities for 14 years now, they were early adopters to the UPK program and were kind of stuck at a certain level when it came to UPK funding. The fact that we are actually phasing them in and bringing them to an equal level has a very large, meaningful

impact on those school districts, and just as importantly on the children that will be participating in that program.

I'm pleased that collectively we're able to work together to raise at least the minimum threshold. We know that we're in for challenging times. Schools (indiscernible) populations, through no fault of anybody here because it's happening in all of the states in this country, continue to decline. And that's gonna continue to add future pressures. But this year, we're moving it up to at least a minimum floor of two percent which will having a meaningful difference.

I also want to speak briefly on the school bus delay. I support the concept of electric school buses, it makes good sense. However, it is very clear in the times that we're living in when it comes to energy supply, when it comes to the challenges utilities are dealing with, when it comes to the challenges that ratepayers are dealing with, that now is not the time to continue to push this mandate. And I think the five-year delay is warranted. But I also think it's an opportunity for us collectively to work together to see how we make this program, how we reset this program to make sure it works and meets the accomplishments. Listen, I'm in the North Country to a certain degree up here and my other colleagues are even further north. Oh, I will stop at that.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

MR. MCDONALD: Thank you for your support. Goodbye.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. McDonald in the affirmative.

Ms. Bailey to explain her vote.

MS. BAILEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be voting no for this portion of the budget and that does not take away the positives that are in here. But I did just get off the phone with one of my superintendents who actually has a reduction from what the original school aid run was in the Executive Budget. And just with the delay, you know, yesterday they went to their voters with their school budget, I can't in good conscious patch -- pass this budget after the fact. That's very bothersome to me.

The EV buses as my -- as my colleagues have mentioned, I have school districts in -- in rural Upstate New York who have purchased EV buses and have done extensive data-gathering; it does not work. I don't care how long we kick that can down the road, we're gonna continue to kick that can down the road in Upstate New York. And my concern is, you know, it's nice to hear from my colleague that, you know, we need to have the conversations and what does that look like moving forward.

The school budgets went to vote yesterday. The propositions that got voted down on the school budgets in my area were those that were requesting EV buses. We really need to just look at this, look at could it not be a pilot program for school districts that wish to opt in, I believe we would have several that do and then we would have those where it does not make sense not do it.

So I will be voting no for this budget. Although I -- I am grateful for the increase in -- in funding to -- to the majority of my schools and I do love the piece of, you know, back to the basics math. Being a numbers person, I -- I applaud that and look forward to that.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Bailey -- Ms. Bailey in the negative.

Mr. Sayegh to explain his vote.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you, Madam Speaker, to explain my vote. Although I will be voting for the budget, I wanted to state my displeasure with the amount of changes or the lack of changes made to the State Education Funding Formula. Although we have recommendations from the Rockefeller Program recommending some minor changes, in my opinion it doesn't go far enough. Too often school districts like mine in the City of Yonkers, New York, where the present funding formula is based primarily on the wealth of the county you live in, the formula doesn't work for a city like mine. A city like mine that happens to be in a wealthy Westchester County community and county is shortchanged because in a city like mine where we have the same number of English Language Learners, same number of special ed students' percentages and we have the same learning needs. We all know as educators it takes smaller class sizes, it takes a lot more services to serve students with special needs and English Language Learners. And although some strides have been made, many school districts across our State are shortchanged and

their students are not given the ample of a quality education they deserve and my hope is that we continue to encourage changes so there's equity in education and equality across the State.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Sayegh in the affirmative.

Mr. Bologna to explain his vote.

MR. BOLOGNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a number of my colleagues have pointed out with the electric school bus delay, well, that's great. I represent almost a dozen school districts, I cannot count one that actually wants an EV bus mandate. I -- I just -- from the conception of this.

So, this Body really has a lack of respect for local governments, specifically school boards because Lord knows we're giving them a budget this late in May when most of these school boards have already started voting. And at this point, what does it even mean to be in a school board? We -- we -- I read an article today that people don't even want to be in a school board anymore. Well, why? Because clearly what they think and what they want doesn't matter according to this Body. So the fact of the matter is is that a five-year delay is political cowardice and frankly, unless there was a full repeal and we allow actual local control, it's kind of a joke in my opinion. So I'll be down on that.

Thank you very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Bologna in the

negative.

Mr. Cashman to explain his vote.

MR. CASHMAN: Madam Speaker, this is my first budget and since I've joined this Chamber, I've been absolutely dogged in pushing back on the EV buses. What works in Manhattan may not necessarily work in Malone and we know this. A five-year pause is a positive thing and that's while I'll be voting for this budget. But we need to continue to look at the regional realities of capacity and cost structure. That is just the reality.

My Assembly district is the size of Rhode Island. Actually, it's bigger than the size of Rhode Island and the school districts within there tell me again and again and again to get students to the various locations within their school district they simply cannot charge, they could not make the connection, there is a real safety issue. In addition to that, we know many of our bridges in the area are deficient and quite frank, are in critical need of investments there.

So while today we take a pause, we much -- we must continue to work towards realistic approaches within the realities of the North Country and other areas. So with that, with the pause, I will vote in the affirmative.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Cashman in the affirmative.

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Madam Speaker, could you please call the Ways and Means Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ways and Means Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room. Ways and Means to the Speaker's Conference Room.

Ms. Lunsford for the purpose of an introduction.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for letting me interrupt our proceedings for an introduction on behalf of Assemblymember Pat Carroll. With us today is the Rockland County Legislator, Dr. Aney Paul and other distinguished guests from the Indian Cultural Heritage and Arts Awareness Club. The India Cultural Society of Rockland, Hudson Valley Malayalee Association and Jeevan Jyoti who have joined us today to celebrate Indian Heritage Month. ICHAA and ICSR add to the diverse culture in Rockland County by promoting Indian heritage and culture through many events throughout the year. These events include concerts and other cultural shows as well as food and clothing drives giving back to their community.

If you would please recognize them and give them the privileges of the floor, we would greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. On behalf of Ms. Lunsford, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Wieder, the Speaker and all

members, we welcome our distinguished guests to the Assembly Chamber, Legislator Paul, the folks from the Indian Cultural Heritage and Arts Awareness Association and other organizations represented with you here today. We extend to you to the privileges of the floor and hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Welcome all as you're celebrating Indian Heritage Awareness Month and we thank you so very much for joining us here today.

(Applause)

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We're going to be continuing our Calendar today on page 20 by Ms. Bichotte Hermelyn, Calendar No. 184.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. We're gonna be on debate, colleagues.

On the main Calendar, page 20, Calendar No. 184, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07194-C, Calendar No. 184, Bichotte Hermelyn, Alvarez, Reyes, Kelles, Levenberg, Taylor, Bores, Jacobson. An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to prohibiting student loan payment history checks in making employment decisions.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested.

Ms. Bichotte Hermelyn.

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes. This bill

would amend the subdivision of the new Section 380-A of the General Business Law to expand the definition of prohibited consumer credit history information that employers may not request or use in employment decisions to include student loan payment history. This bill prohibits employers from checking or using an applicant's student loan credit history. Specifically bars employees from using information that would reveal the payment status of a student loan and it applies to all employment decisions including hiring, promotion and retention.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield, please?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MS. WALSH: Thank you. So what's -- what's the reason for this bill? Why are we doing this?

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Well, you know, this bill is necessary because student loans have been a major financial burden for millions of people, especially young workers and employment decisions should be based on qualifications not whether someone had difficulty paying a -- a loan payment.

MS. WALSH: All right. But I mean, don't you think that -- I -- I guess you don't because you put the bill forward. But I

mean, what about the -- the idea that an -- an employee -- or an employer might be very interested to know if a potential or perspective employee is deep under water in debt?

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: I don't think that should make a difference if they [sic] deep water in debt because a -- of student loans and, you know, student loans should be viewed also as different because they are tied to education, which is something that we want to encourage people to pursue. We want to encourage people to go to college, pursue a higher education and people should not be penalized in the job market for investing in their future. So student loans, debt should be viewed very different. It's not -- it doesn't put someone in a position where, you know, they're irresponsible. Sometimes it's just really hard to find a job to pay back the student loan, so...

MS. WALSH: Do you have a -- do you have the same point of view as far as other kinds of debt? Like if somebody is a perspective employee but they're under water in just general credit card debt?

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: You know, I -- I -- I do actually. You know why? Because very often students are a victim, they are targeted. Credit card companies come onto their campuses and they target these students and many of these students, especially students from my community, are not prepared to understand the -- how they can be victim of credit card use, especially when they have limited means on campus. Many students from my

community come from homes with very little means. Sometimes it's very tough to, you know, just buy a book so that you can continue to keep on with -- with the class, and credit cards could be used as a means to finance their education as well.

MS. WALSH: I mean completely agree with you that there is -- there are a lot of people in New York and around the country that don't know how to handle debt that -- that charge up a lot of stuff that they really can't afford. I'm just saying that -- and I -- and I don't think that that is -- that is exclusive to, you know, any specific demographic within New York State. I just think that -- I mean, I -- my statistics show that -- I don't know, 43 million people currently carry student loan debt. So I mean it's not like it's uncommon. I just am saying that from a -- a prospective employer's point of view, I mean I -- I've been an -- an employer that has handled payroll, handled hiring, handled benefits administration for a small company and I would certainly want to know if I'm looking to hire somebody who has a little bit of debt or a lot of debt and I -- I would like to at least know that information. I mean it's certainly not uncommon that people are going to have debt, but to know how much debt there is. I mean, because I think it does go to personal accountability and, you know, not everybody's a victim. I don't know.

I think -- I think that you -- I think you've answered my questions and I think probably at this point my opinions would be better expressed on the bill.

So Madam Speaker, may I please go on the bill?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MS. WALSH: Okay. So just to continue, I -- I think that, you know, listen, it's not uncommon that we have student loan debt. I at one time, I -- I mean I think five of my six kids have gone through college and all of them came out with various amounts of debt. But this bill doesn't mean just the debt -- the student loan debt that a 21-year-old has when they're going out to get their first job. This could be, you know, this could be a 45-year-old or a 55-year-old that's still carrying a substantial amount of student loan debt and I think that that's good information for an -- a prospective employer to have. If you have a -- an that's individual in their 50s that's still carrying hundreds of thousands of dollars of student loan debt, I mean as an employer I would want to know that. I -- I would want to know that because maybe that person is gonna be handling money in the job that I would be offering them. Maybe they would be -- have to use discretion in making decisions that have to do with money. I -- I don't know. I just think that it's -- it's information that's important. I think that overall, while I have sympathy for individuals that have racked up credit card or other debt, I think that, you know, there are many people who didn't, and if you're an employer and you're trying to decide who to hire, I think that that's good information to have.

So it's interesting what this bill does really is it -- it -- it adds to a bill that was passed last year that was carried by another member, carried by Mr. Dinowitz and that bill last year rendered the use of a job applicant's credit history an unlawful and discriminatory

practice for an employer when hiring, compensating or using for employment-related purposes. That bill passed 98 to 46. So what this bill does today is it takes student loan payment credit history and it puts that into the definition of consumer credit history. So it builds upon essentially the bill from last year.

So I guess what I'm saying is if you didn't like last year's bill and you voted against it, you're not gonna probably like this one either because it's just adding to it. I think that -- I think that student loan debt is so common that it's unlikely that employers are really likely to prioritize consideration of this type of information when hiring because it is just so common, but I don't think that that's any reason to prevent an employer from having this information or from giving it the weight that an employer feels that it deserves.

So I will be opposing this bill. I would encourage my colleagues to also oppose it. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Bichotte Hermelyn on the bill.

MS. BICHOTTE HERMELYN: On the bill, Madam Speaker. Just wanted to point out that student loan debt well is in excess of 1.2 trillion nationwide and climbing. According to the Consumer Financial Protection Board [sic], the burden posed by this burgeoning debt is making it increasingly difficult for college graduates and attendees to meet their financial bur -- obligations in a timely matter. I also want to point out that this bill aims to protect applicant information that has no bearing on their ability to perform a

job well ethically and this bill acts as a check against employers who may otherwise make assumptions about applicants based on student loan payment history. Studies have consistently shown there is no correlation whatsoever between one's debt and their ability to perform well or their qualifications for a position despite nearly half of the employees in the United States considering one's credit history when making hiring decisions. And such practices have also been shown to have been -- have had disproportionate effects on minority -- minority groups such as women and people of color. Women applicants with a bad credit report are significantly less likely to be selected over their male counterparts even if they resume -- even if their resumes are nearly identical. The study also found that running a credit check on Black applicants with bad credit scores was less likely to be selected for callbacks over their white counterparts, ultimately underlying existing concerns that credit reports in hiring decisions exacerbate existing economic disadvantage. Students of color and first generation students are more likely to depend on loans to get through school. Eighty percent of Black young adults pursue college with loans compared to 65% of their white peers.

And according to the U.S. Department of Education, more than five million borrows [sic] have not made a monthly payment in over 360 days and sit in default, many for more than seven years and four million borrows [sic] are in late stage delinquency; that is 91 to 188 -- 80 days late. This is not the fault of these individuals as the incredible increases in -- in tuition over the past few decades

show. At the current rate 10 million borrowers could be in default within a few months. In other words, 25% of federal student loan portfolio [sic] will be in default. It is inappropriate, absolutely inappropriate under these conditions to draw conclusions about applicants who have student loan debts, even ones who have been late on payments. We are in a true cost of living crisis in New York and across the country and tuition increases have absolutely, absolutely played a role. Prohibiting the use of this information is a smart move that will ensure millions of applicants are not unfairly judged by their potential employer.

Again, this bill is important. The student loan debt is not a character flaw, it is not a measure of responsibility, integrity or work ethic. It is a reflection of the cost of opportunity in America, a cost that fought -- that falls hardest on working families, first generation students, immigrants and communities of color. When employers use student loan payment history to judge whether someone deserves a job, they are not measuring reliability, they are measuring economic hardship. They are measuring who had general wealth and who did not and that is discrimination plain and simple. And let's be clear, people fall people behind on student loans for the same reasons they would fall behind on rent, medical bills or childcare because the cost of living outpace wages, because life happens. Because the system is unequal. Look at all of us here, Madam Speaker. We haven't gotten paid for several weeks and guess what? I bet you that many of us are falling behind in some of our financial responsibilities.

But should we be judged not to be legislators anymore? Should the people of New York fire us because we fall behind? No. None of that has any -- anything to do whether someone can show up, work hard and contribute to their workplace. And when we allow employers to use student loan payment status as a barrier to employment, we trap them in a vicious cycle. You can't pay your loans because you don't have a job and you can't get a job because you can't pay your loans. That is not fairness, that is not justice and that is not the New York we are building.

In closing, if education's supposed to be the great equalizer, then we cannot allow student debt to become the great disqualifier. This bill ensures that New Yorkers are judged by their skills, their character and their commitment, not by the balance of a loan they took out to chase the American Dream.

I will be voting in the affirmative, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Pirozzolo.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Madam Speaker, if I may, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. PIROZZOLO: So this really wasn't a bill I thought I would want to comment on. But I just want to throw back, I don't agree with a lot of the sponsor's comments and I'm just gonna use one kind of an example. So in my particular business, it doesn't

really make a difference to me if a person is paying their student loan or they're not paying their student loan or possibly other bills. But what does make a difference to me and what may become relevant in a decision is if I'm speaking to someone and we talk about the student loan and let's say it comes up, if they say, *ah, you know, I'm behind on my student loan but I'm trying to do the best that I can. I -- I need a job for this reason.* And I see that that person is aggressive and they're trying to work, that puts them really at the top of the list as far as people to choose from.

If I'm doing an interview with someone and again, not necessarily my business, but I can see other employer's point of view, if I'm doing an interview with someone who says, *yeah, I have student debt, but I'm just not going to pay it anymore because I'm waiting for another bailout,* or *I just ignore it,* or, you know, *I don't think I can do it so I push it off*, well, that's a totally different candidate that I'm possibly hiring and bringing into -- into a business. So I think that the way a person answers questions certainly could lead to whether a decision should be made on this employee could be more valuable to me, more valuable to my company, more valuable to my patients, my customers, or anything that's happening rather than someone who's going to say, *well, you know, I got the job. Maybe I just have to sit here because I don't really have to earn it just like I don't really have to pay back my debts, no matter what type of debts they are.*

So I'm gonna have to vote no on this bill. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote's been requested.

Mr. Gandolfo.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Republican Conference will generally be opposed to this bill; however, any member who wishes to vote yes may do so at their desks now.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Majority Conference will be in the affirmative on this bill. If you would like to deviate from that position you may do so at your desks.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Taylor to explain his vote.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to -- let me keep it tight. I want to applaud the sponsor on this legislation and it's just be -- befounds [sic] with the thing that have happened in Washington and the things that are being eroded that America is so badly in debt that people would probably never get a

job if it was up to certain people. I think it's in -- unimaginable that an employer, a -- a prospective employer needs to know about my responsibilities to education and those bills. I think that if I found someone that had a big debt to -- to student loan, I would probably want that person because they'd be available for work study and -- not work study, for overtime and everything. But it is none of the employer's business whether or not -- and for the record, I was in debt for over $600,000 in student loan when I started here. Nobody gave me jack diddly.

America availed us to an opportunity to be able to pay off your loan and work simultaneously and if we're gonna get ahead and we're telling our children to go to school, then we damn sure should not burden them with debt that is going to strangle them to death. It is imperative that we let this go forward. America can do better, hasn't done better, but New York State can lead the way by allowing people that are in debt to be able to go to work and pay. If not, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You don't care about what you're doing, so therefore you can't get ahead, but you won't give me an employment opportunity. Let's not talk about it, let's be about it.

I vote in the affirmative.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Taylor in the affirmative.

Mr. Kim to explain his vote.

MR. KIM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's a very famous quote that says, "If you owe the bank $100, that's your

problem. If you owe the bank $100 million, that's the bank's problem." That's by a very well known oil tycoon, founder of Getty Oil and he's a -- a hyper mega capitalist that knows the system inside out. But he himself along many other people who are part of the system know the flaws of our debt -- debt and debt systems and finance systems, especially around student debt.

1.2 trill -- $1.2 trillion and rising. Imagine that could be forgiven, imagine the impact of that money going back into local commerce, local business, local economy, housing, car loans, all the things that young people can't afford. This is not -- this is a no-brainer. Any -- any developed country around the world has forgiven student debt, or at least given a haircut because it does not make any sense. We're the only country that still persists because part of it is -- I have to -- you have to look at the data; it's racial. It disproportionately impacts Black and brown students. The majority of the students that are suffering from debt are Black and brown students and they have the least ability to -- to -- to rise up and -- and have -- and have access to social mobility.

So you -- if you really want economic equality, if you really want an economy that works, at the minimum we shouldn't judge people by their history of what they have in student debt. We should go further and we should be tackling this debt for our students and borrowers.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Kim in the affirmative.

Ms. Pheffer Amato to explain her vote.

MS. PHEFFER AMATO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to congratulate the sponsor of this bill. It is no one's business as an employer of what your debt is in an interview. And I want to say proudly for the ten years that I've served in this Assembly, that every member of my staff, except for this one, has been in debt and we have solved 10,000 cases, have passed 50 bills made into law and it doesn't judge anybody's ability to get to work on time, to do a good job and be responsible and maybe taking the approach of an employer to be a mentor to those that don't have privilege is the way that we solve this problem.

Thank you to the sponsor for bringing this forward.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Pheffer Amato in the affirmative.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you could please call the Rules Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Rules Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room. Rules Committee member, Speaker's Conference Room.

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We will now go to our friend Ms. Rosenthal, Calendar No. 228, page 23.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Page 23, Calendar No. 228, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A00795, Calendar No. 228, Rosenthal. An act to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of nineteen seventy-four and the Emergency Housing Rent Control Law, in relation to requiring the Division of Housing and Community Renewal to publish the results of annual audits of approved applications for temporary major capital improvement increases on its website annually.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested.

Ms. Rosenthal.

MS. ROSENTHAL: Okay. This bill would require the Division of Housing and Community Renewal to publish results of the annual audit of 25% of the submitted and approved applications for major capital improvement rent increases.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Pirozzolo.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Good afternoon again, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MS. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Thank you, Ms. Rosenthal. How are you today?

MS. ROSENTHAL: I'm good, thank you. How are you?

MR. PIROZZOLO: Good, good. In that explanation, could you just go over that one more time? You're looking to post the results of what?

MS. ROSENTHAL: Okay. Of approved applications for major capital improvement rent increases.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So can I get an explanation of that? So if a landlord has an emergency repair, they --

MS. ROSENTHAL: It's not emergence. I -- I mean it could be, but it's not generally an emergency repair.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So then any type of repair?

MS. ROSENTHAL: Anything that would qualify as a building-wide major capital improvement. For example, a new boiler, a new roof.

MR. PIROZZOLO: And what would be the reason that you want this amount to be posted?

MS. ROSENTHAL: Well, the reason is in 2019, in the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act, we required that DHCR annually conducted an audit of 25% of the applications for an

MCI rent increase. However, we did not include on how we get to know the results of those audits. So in the interest of transparency, this bill asks that it be posted.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So in posting this information, how would it affect the landlord in being able to increase the rent?

MS. ROSENTHAL: It -- these are submissions that were approved, so it had no effect.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. So then if it has no effect, why do we feel the need to make it public that this might have no effect with this number?

MS. ROSENTHAL: Well, it has no effect in that the landlord will have been granted permission to perform and to collect the rent increases. This is a transparency measure since we required that they conduct an audit. It's really the public's right to see the results of the audit. Just like with any report that we pass, we get the chance to see the results.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Yeah. I -- I understand that. So if I hear you clearly, this in no way affects a landlord's ability to possibly raise the rent just because this publish -- this study was published?

MS. ROSENTHAL: No, because it's published after the authorization was permitted.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay. Because I had, you know, just, you know, I don't want to say sidebar but into this I have great

concern because, you know, everyone says there's housing shortages in New York City or housing shortages everywhere and part of the reason is because landlords cannot fix their properties because the money they have to put into fixing an individual apartment or replacing a boiler for the entire building could be cost-prohibitive to the increase that they're allowed to get. So this would have no impact on that whatsoever?

MS. ROSENTHAL: No. And -- and in terms of fixing apartments, those are generally individual apartment improvements and this is about major capital improvements.

MR. PIROZZOLO: I get it, but every tenant in the building would be part of a major capital improvement, so somewhere in the future their rent could be possibly raised because that's gonna be expended.

MS. ROSENTHAL: It -- it was raised.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Okay.

MS. ROSENTHAL: This is post --

MR. PIROZZOLO: I get it.

MS. ROSENTHAL: -- permission.

MR. PIROZZOLO: Thank you very much.

MS. ROSENTHAL: You're welcome.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If the Environmental Conservation Committee could please go to the Speaker's Conference Room.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Environmental Conservation Committee members please make your way to the Speaker's Conference Room. ENCON Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote's been requested.

Mr. Gandolfo.

MR. GANDOLFO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Republican Conference will generally be opposed to this bill; however, any member who wishes to vote in the affirmative may do so at their desk.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Majority Conference will primarily be in the affirmative on this bill. If anybody would like to vote in the negative, they may do so from their seat.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members have on their desk a B-Calendar. I would like to move to advance that Calendar.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: On a motion by Ms. Lunsford, the B-Calendar is advanced.

On consent, page 3, Calendar No. 138, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01204, Rules Report No. 138, Solages. An act to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to requiring certain disclosures and charges by attorneys performing services in connection with a real property tax grievance procedure.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: The bill is laid aside -- laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03029-A, Calendar -- Rules Report No. 139, Kelles, Schiavoni, Gallagher. An act to amend the Executive Law, in relation to establishing standards for the reuse of deconstructed building materials.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If we could please go to Rules Report No. 170 on page 9 of the B-Calendar.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: The Clerk will read.

Page 9, Rules Report No. 10 -- 170.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A11465, Rules Report No. 170, Committee on Rules (Pretlow). An act making appropriations for the support of government; to amend Chapter 98 of the Laws of 2026, relating to making appropriations for the support of government, in relation thereto; to amend Chapter 100 of the Laws of 2026, relating to making appropriations for the support of government, in relation thereto; to amend Chapter 102 of the Laws of 2026, relating to making appropriations for the support of government, in relation thereto; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: Governor's men -- message is at the desk.

The Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: I hereby certify to an immediate vote,

Kathy Hochul, Governor.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: An explanation has been requested.

Mr. Pretlow.

MR. PRETLOW: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. This is a -- an additional extender. It would ensure funding for State operations and other programs through May 26th. The bill includes additional funding for Medicaid payments, unemployment insurance, OPWDD services, veterans' programs and other general State charges.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the Chairman yield for some questions?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes -- yes, I will.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you, Mr. Pretlow. Good to talk to you again.

MR. PRETLOW: Déjà vu all over again.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, it is. I think we're going to be doing a little bit of this for the next period of time. You answered my first question as you always do. This goes till May 26th.

MR. PRETLOW: Correct.

MR. PALMESANO: My second question, I know you know what this is, but what is the total amount of now 14 emergency extenders to this point?

MR. PRETLOW: The -- the total overall 14

extenders is $33.7 billion.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And the increase above the previous extender is how much?

MR. PRETLOW: 1.9 billion.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. And I -- I do have some other questions, but I did kind of want to ask and I know I mentioned it during the ELFA bill, it seems like we're getting there. I just wanted to get your take -- I know we've gone through the baseball analogies of metal dropping. I'm -- I'm just curious, where's -- where's the metal at? I -- I've always tried -- want to see is it dropped or is it hanging? Where is it at exactly?

MR. PRETLOW: Well, I'm -- hopefully that I -- I --I -- I referenced this -- the earlier bill as the first inning using our baseball analogy. I think tomorrow we hit the second inning. So we're -- we're moving there. Hopefully we'll have a -- a doubleheader very shortly and we'll keep -- keep -- keep this going.

MR. PALMESANO: So is your expect -- I mean, we did the first one -- first budget bill, well, second budget bill -- the -- the first one since April 1st is today --

MR. PRETLOW: Yes. Is today.

MR. PALMESANO: We'll do one tomorrow and then you expect then the -- the bills after that will take place next week?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Hopefully starting Tuesday or

definitely starting Tuesday?

MR. PRETLOW: Hopefully definitely starting Tuesday.

(Laughter)

MR. PALMESANO: Are there any outstanding issues that you're still trying to tie together that haven't been resolved yet? Anything that you can share?

MR. PRETLOW: There are -- there are several outstanding issues but they're extremely small, but they are issues.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. Can I -- if I -- if I just as I've done in the past on past extenders, may I just ask if -- if it's outstanding you can say it's outstanding, if we're close or if it's finalized we're just not gonna talk --

MR. PRETLOW: At this point, Mr. Palmesano, everything is really close.

MR. PALMESANO: Close. Auto insurance?

MR. PRETLOW: Close.

MR. PALMESANO: Speaker Tier 6?

MR. PRETLOW: Very.

MR. PALMESANO: Immigration, CLCPA?

MR. PRETLOW: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. Fair enough. And there's one interesting -- I saw a report this week that said this budget process seems to have been a slow roll to actually prevent members from having to vote on controversial legislation before the end of the

Session. I'd just be curious what your assessment is on those reports? I mean reports are reports. Do you have any thoughts on that or is that true or accurate?

(Crosstalk)

MR. PRETLOW: I would never characterize that as -- as this. This is going as slowly as it did because we had specific things that we wanted in the budget and when we had specific things that we didn't agree with the Executive within the budget and that caused the delay. It had nothing to do with difficult bills or people that didn't want to vote on bills because you always have the opportunity to check yourself out of the box and not vote on something or to vote no.

MR. PALMESANO: That's fair enough. Mr. Pretlow, thank you very much. I look forward to talking to you another time, but I appreciate your time.

Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: On the bill.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you, Madam Speaker and my colleagues. You know, when I looked back to the start of this process and looked to where we are now, this is our 14th budget extender, 14 budget extenders, two actual budget bills passed. When this process start -- started, first we were told we'd have a timely budget. Then we were told it'd be done by May and last month, the Governor said to us that the budget would be done by the time of the LCA show. Well, it's now May 20th and the LCA show came and

went last night and here we are with still no final budget. We're still passing extenders, still without a budget. Now we all know the LCA show, it's the Capitol's annual comedy roast. That happened before the budget did. And the budget, I mean, we're talking about a very, very large budget, correct? We're talking about nearly of a quarter trillion dollars. That's a lot of money, that's certainly a lot of zeros. A lot, a lot of zeros.

So at that LCA show, the LCA worked. They did their job, the skits got finalized, the jokes were delivered, but we have not done our job and the budget is still not delivered. Now, that should not be a surprise to all of us in this Chamber because at this point, the comedy of this process writes itself. Even if the LCA couldn't script something as absurd as this budget debacle and they've had months to try it. This is really at the end of the day embarrassing.

You know, when we started this project -- so now we've started the budget process, we passed a budget bill. We're going to be asked to vote over the next two weeks but we still don't have the full fiscal impact. We still don't have the financial plan. That's important for us to know as we take up any budget bill. The last budget bill was, you know, education. That's a nearly $40 billion component. We should have that information, the public should have that information before we are voting on actual budget bills. But really, it's the level of dysfunction that leaves everyone with more questions than answers.

It's been seven weeks, my colleagues. It's really

unacceptable. Now of course, I'm gonna vote for the -- this extender because I want our dedicated employees who do such a trem -- tremendous job for around us -- the State providing important services. But again, let's be honest about what's happening. The LCA put on a better organized production this year than the Legislature has done, and unfortunately, that's not a joke. That's just the standard that we've set for ourselves in this Chamber.

So again, I vote yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker and my colleagues.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: On a motion by Mr. Pretlow, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to interrupt our proceedings for an introduction on behalf of Assemblymember Ramos and Mitaynes. The SUMAQ Peruvian Food Festival is one of New York and Long Island's cultural treasures, a

celebration of Peru's vibrant heritage, world-renowned cuisine and the pride and resilience of the Peruvian-American community. This event was occurring earlier today just as I got pulled into this seat so if anybody's brought me lomo saltado I will introduce you with even more fervor.

If you would please grant the organizers of this event the privileges of the floor on behalf of our colleagues, we would appreciate it.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: On behalf of Ms. Lunsford, Mr. Ramos and Ms. Mitaynes as well as all members within the Assembly, we welcome you as we are excited that you're here today. Clearly you bring a great movement of individuals that are so sincere in regards to honoring so many individuals. So again, I thank you for being here today. I appreciate you bringing not only your culture but outstanding food that you have shared with so many of us. Thank you.

(Applause)

On consent, page 3, Rules Report No. 140, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03450-A, Cal -- Rules Report No. 140, Santabarbara, Pheffer Amato, Colton, DeStefano, Zaccaro, Stern, Manktelow, Tague, Hyndman, Giglio. An act to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to defining "period of war" for the alternative veterans' exemption.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER BUTTENSCHON: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would you please call the Housing Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Housing Committee members, make your way to the Speaker's Conference Room to see Chair Rosenthal. Housing Committee, Speaker's Conference Room.

On consent, page 3, Rules Report No. 141, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03602, Rules Report No. 141, Seawright, Griffin, McDonald, Reyes, Zaccaro, Hooks. An act to amend the Elder Law, in relation to requiring an annual report on individuals who are the primary caregiver for an older adult.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A05578-A, Rules Report No. 142, Hunter, Griffin. An act to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to real property tax exemptions for veterans.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06032, Rules Report No. 143, Griffin. An act to amend the Real Property Tax Law, in relation to enhanced eligibility requirements of STAR.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Griffin, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Ms. Griffin to explain her vote.

MS. GRIFFIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to explain my vote. This bill is a simple but effective measure that helps senior homeowners receive timely property tax relief after retirement. Under current law, eligibility for Enhanced STAR is based on tax returns from two years ago. This means many newly retired seniors must wait years for relief even after their income has significantly dropped. A homeowner living primarily on Social Scurity should not be evaluated as though they are still earning a full-time salary. This legislation simply allows recently retired seniors to use their most recent tax return when applying for Enhanced STAR benefits. For older New Yorkers on fixed incomes, this change can make a meaningful difference in managing rising costs and remaining in their homes. If we are serious about helping seniors age in place, we must ensure our tax relief programs reflect their current financial reality. This bill does not create a new benefit, but ensures eligible seniors can access an existing benefit sooner. Our seniors have spent decades contributing to their communities and paying taxes. They deserve a system that responds fairly and promptly when they retire. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Griffin in the affirmative.

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06347, Rules Report No. 144, Otis, Colton. An act to amend the State Technology Law, in relation to requiring governmental entities to implement multifactor authentication for local and remote network access.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 365th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A07844-B, Rules Report No. 145, Sempolinski. An act to amend the Town Law and the Public Officers Law, in relation to authorizing the town justice of the Town of West Almond, County of Allegany, to be a nonresident of such town.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by

Mr. Sempolinski, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08030-A, Rules Report No. 146, Hunter. An act to amend the Real Property Law, in relation to limits on amount of flood insurance required by a mortgagee.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08124, Rules Report No. 147, Pretlow. An act to amend the Executive Law, in relation to

designating certain entities relating to the decommissioning of Indian Point state agencies for the purposes of MWBE participation.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08567, Rules Report No. 148, Simon, Zaccaro. An act to amend the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law, in relation to compliance by New York City Marshals with filing requirement regarding service of a notice of eviction.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Simon, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08798-A, Rules Report No. 149, Woerner, McDonald. An act to amend the Highway Law, in relation to dedicating a portion of the State Highway System to Assembly Member Bobby D'Andrea.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Ms. Walsh to explain her vote.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want

to thank the sponsor for bringing this bill forward. I think it's so appropriate that Assemblymember Bobby D'Andrea is remembered by naming a portion of road for him because he was a man who was just constantly on the move in his district. He -- it was often said that if there were two people gathered anywhere he would be the third person. He went to every -- he was just such a -- embedded so much in his community from every single fire department, anything. To chicken barbecue to pancake breakfast, this man -- and I don't know how -- I don't know how he stayed so slender because he was just going from every single -- well, I guess because he was always in motion. But what a remarkable public servant who never forgot where he came from, who was so proud to serve here in the People's House and very glad to be able to vote yes on this. And it's -- it -- it -- it feels good. It feels good to remember him in this way.

So again, I just want to thank the sponsor for bringing it forward and I'll proudly vote yes. Thanks.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Ms. Walsh in the affirmative.

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could you please call the Codes Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Codes Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room. Codes Committee members to the Speaker's Conference Room.

On page 5, Rules Report No. 150, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A08901-A, Rules Report No. 150, Torres. An act to amend the Agriculture and Markets Law, in relation to providing additional duties of the Community Gardens Task Force.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Torres, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A09321, Rules Report No. 151, Berger, Kay, Hevesi, Conrad, Woerner, Cashman, Hooks, Buttenschon, Wieder, Lasher, Kassay, Yeger, P. Carroll, Lee, Eichenstein, Clark, Torres, Santabarbara, Pheffer Amato, Bores, Reyes, Dinowitz, Shimsky, Taylor, Kim, Eachus, Wright, Rivera, Simone, Williams, Simon, Anderson, Stern, Chandler-Waterman,

McDonald, Burke, Lunsford, Levenberg, Lavine, Weprin, Paulin, Benedetto, McMahon, Tapia, Burroughs, Fall, Solages, Lupardo, Jackson, Dais, Zaccaro, Stirpe, Schiavoni, Rozic, Steck, Rajkumar, Lucas, Walker, R. Carroll, O'Pharrow, Colton, Cunningham, Jacobson, Sayegh, Hunter, Bichotte Hermelyn, Meeks, Alvarez, Seawright, Cruz, Romero, De Los Santos, Septimo, Raga, Griffin. An act to amend the Education Law, in relation to supervision by certain marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Mr. Berger, the Senate bill is before the House. The Senate bill is advanced.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 120th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A09539, Rules Report No. 152, Cashman. An act to authorize certain health care professionals licensed to practice in other jurisdictions to practice in this state in connection with an event sanctioned by the World Triathlon Corporation; and providing for the repeal of such provisions

upon expiration thereof.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A09665, Rules Report No. 153, Cashman, Bronson, P. Carroll, Lupardo, Colton, Santabarbara, Steck, DeStefano, Chludzinski, Hevesi, Dinowitz, Dilan, Cook, Woerner, Conrad, Rivera, Eachus, McMahon, Lunsford. An act to repeal Paragraph (G) of Subdivision 4 of Section of 209 of the Civil Service Law, relating to resolutions of disputes in the course of collective negotiations with certain deputy sheriffs.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A10173, Rules Report No. 154, Septimo, Forrest, Gallagher, Shrestha. An act to amend the Real Property Law, in relation to requiring proof of full sale price.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A10293-A, Rules

Report No. 155, McMahon. An act in relation to authorizing Michael O'Brien to take the competitive Civil Service Examination for the position of police officer and be placed on the eligible list for employment as a full-time police officer for the village of Le Roy.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Home Rule Message is at the desk.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Resolutions, on the main Calendar, page 3, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1408, Rules at the Request of Mr. Lemondes.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 20, 2026, as Armenian Heritage Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Lemondes.

MR. LEMONDES: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, I rise with the upmost respect and humility to honor this day on behalf of all of those

killed and displaced by the Pontian, Greek, Armenian and Assyrian genocide commonly and historically referred to as the Armenian Genocide. In recognition of their fate which ensnared so many, two of whom were my grandparents. Ironically, I speak very infrequently of this. In fact, publicly the only time I have is in this Chamber and I do so not to seek your pity, but simply your acknowledgement that this event occurred.

For the benefit of those who may not know, this genocide was the first state-sponsored mass genocide of modern civilization and served as the blueprint from what's the -- from which the German's refined the concept to use against the Jews 20 years later. Their participation was as a result of the Ottoman-German Wartime Alliance many with -- with many German officials, both military officers and diplomats witnessing firsthand the atrocities committed against these ethnic Christian minorities. Taking place from 1914 to 1922, it was a systematic extermination of an entire population where the Ottoman Turks directed the killing of over 353,000 Pontian and Anatolian Asia Minor Greeks and another million plus Armenians and Assyrians. An equal number were forced to flee their homeland in one of the most condemnable atrocities in the history of the world. These refugees were largely considered stateless and were resettled worldwide. And depending on the source consulted, these numbers of those killed and resettled are considered conservative.

The Ottoman regime sought to consolidate its

wartime position and to finance the Turkification of Anatolia by confiscating the assets of murdered or deported Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians. This illegal redistribution of property also provided incentive for large numbers of ordinary people to join in the assault on their neighbors.

Last, crimes against humanity must always be condemned because studies by genocide scholars demonstrate the single best predictor of future genocide is denial of past genocide coupled with impunity for its perpetrators. Genocide deniers are three times more likely to commit genocide again versus -- versus other governments. Let us forever be vigilant.

Thank you for listening.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1409, Rules at the Request of Mr. O'Pharrow.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 22, 2026, as Maritime Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Maritime Day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1410, Rules

at the Request of Mr. Sayegh.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 21, 2026, as Yoga Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Sayegh on the resolution.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Yoga Day is an ancient Hindu practice dating back over 5,000 years and it started in North India where the word "yoga" was first used in the Vedas. It is a practice that promotes physical well-being through stretching, exercises that enhances posture, flexibility, balance and can even help ease body pain. Yoga also improves mental well-being.

Today, we heard from the -- the special prayer from the World Yoga Leader, our friend, Guruji Thankappan, who will hold a yoga class and meditation tomorrow in the LOB from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. So if anyone is interested in joining yoga, learning about the benefits of yoga, it is really catching up in the U.S. as -- as one of the great healing activities.

Thank you very much.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1411, Rules at the Request of Mr. Maher.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 21-27, 2026, as Lightning Safety Awareness Week in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1412, Rules at the Request of Mr. DeStefano.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim September 21-25, 2026, as Hazing Prevention Week in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. DeStefano on the resolution.

MR. DESTEFANO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hazing Prevention Week is an important time dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of hazing and promoting respect, safety and inclusion in schools, colleges, athletic teams and organizations. Hazing has been a longstanding issue in many groups where new members are pressured to participate in harmful, humiliating and dangerous activities in order to gain acceptance. Although some people may see hazing as a tradition or right of passage, it often causes serious emotional, physical and psychological harm.

Hazing Prevention Week reminds communities that belong -- belong [sic] should never come to the cost of a person's dignity or safety. One of the main goals in Hazing Prevention Week is

education. Many students and young people do not fully understand what hazing is or how harmful it can be. Hazing can range from verbal abuse and embarrassing tasks to violence -- physical violence, excessive drinking or sleep deprivation. Even activities that may appear harmless can become dangerous when someone feels forced or intimidated into par -- participating. Through workshops, assemblies, campaigns and discussions, Hazing Prevention Week teaches individuals how to recognize hazing behaviors and encourages them to speak out against them.

Another important aspect of Hazing Prevention Week is promoting positive leadership and healthy team building activities. Organizations often claim that hazing creates unity and strengthens bonds, but true teamwork is built on trust, encouragement and mutual respect. Positive traditions such as volunteer projects, mentorship programs and group activities can help new members feel welcome without fear or humility -- or humiliation. By replacing harmful practices with supportive experiences, organizations can create environments where everyone feels valued and safe.

Hazing Prevention Week also honors victims who have suffered because of the hazing incidents. Tragically, some hazing situations have resulted in severe injuries and even death. These stories serve as a painful reminder of why prevention is necessary. Families, schools and advocacy groups use this week to share personal experiences and encourage stronger anti-hazing policies. These efforts inspire communities to take responsibility and

ensure that no student or member experiences abuse in the name of tradition.

In conclusion, Hazing Prevention Week is more than just a campaign, it is a call to action for respect, accountability and compassion. It encourages people to challenge harpful -- harmful traditions and create communities where inclusion is based on kindness rather than intimidation. By educating others, supporting victims and promoting positive alternatives, Hazing Prevention Week helps build safer environments for everyone. Every individual has a role in preventing hazing and ensuring that all members of a group are treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you, Madam President [sic].

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1413, Rules at the Request of Mr. K. Brown.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim October 2, 2026, as Custodial Worker's Recognition Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1414, Rules at the Request of Ms. Jackson.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim October 9, 2026, as Sneakers Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1415, Rules at the Request of Mr. Ra.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 20, 2026, as Transatlantic Flight Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1416, Rules at the Request of Mr. Brabenec.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim October 2026, as Czech-American Heritage Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: Madam Speaker, do we have any housekeeping or further resolutions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A resolution by Mr. Gray, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 1393, Mr. Gray.

Legislative Resolution mourning the death of United States Border Patrol Agent Sean M. McDonough, devoted public servant, military veteran, family man and beloved member of the North Country Community.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Gray on the resolution.

MR. GRAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise with a heavy heart to speak on this resolution and to ask my colleagues to pause in remembrance of someone who served admirably. Agent Sean McDonough was a son of the North Country; he lived in Depauville, he served as the Customs and Border Patrol Station in Wellesley Island. He gave nearly two decades of his life to federal law enforcement after first wearing the uniform in the United States Army, in the Army National Guard as a military police officer. From the moment he was old enough to serve, he served. That's simply who he was.

On May 1st, while conducting a Marine unit training on the St. Lawrence River near Alexandria Bay, Sean suffered a fatal medical emergency. He died in the line of duty doing what he had done every day for nearly 20 years; preparing the public in -- to protect the public, the people of this country and the community along

the Northern Border. Last week, the streets of Clayton, New York were lined with officers, agents, neighbors and friends. They came from across the State and across the nation to honor him. That procession told you everything you needed to know about the man. Sean was a respected agent by his fellow agents, he was loved by the community and he was grounded in the values of his faith. His Irish-Catholic heritage, the Ancient Order of Hibernians whose motto is friendship, unity and Christian charity; he lived it every single day.

But above all, Sean was a husband to Samantha and a father to Rory and Nora. That is the loss that cuts the deepest. A family in Depauville, New York is grieving today and our entire region grieves with them. In the North Country, we know the men and the women who serve our nation whether it's in the military or guarding our border, they are our neighbors, they are our coaches' kids -- the -- they coach our kids and they sit in the pews of church next to us on Sunday. Sean was all of those things. His loss is felt in every corner of the North Country and far beyond it.

I want to thank my colleagues and ask for their support with this resolution and with that I ask every member of this Chamber to join me in honoring Sean McKulla -- Mc -- McDonough. To Samantha, to Rory and to Nora, the entire McDonough family and to every agent who wears the patch alongside him, know this; the people of New York State stand with you. We will not forget him, we will not forget his service, we will carry his memory with the dignity it deserves.

Agent Sean McDonough was 48 years old. His tour of duty was 19 years. He wore the badge W25. His end of watch was May 1, 2026.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

We have a number of resolutions before the House. Without objection, these resolutions will be taken up together.

On the resolutions, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolutions are adopted.

(Whereupon, Assembly Resolution Nos. 1417 through 1427 were unanimously approved.)

Ms. Lunsford.

MS. LUNSFORD: I now move that the Assembly stand adjourned and that we reconvene tomorrow, Thursday, May 21st at 10 a.m., tomorrow being a Session day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On Ms. Lunsford's motion, the House stands adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the House stood adjourned until Thursday, May 21st at 10 a.m., that being a Session day.)