

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022

2:03 P.M.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The House will come to order.

The Reverend Donna Elia will offer a prayer.

REVEREND DONNA ELIA: Let us pray. Good and merciful God whom we call by many names, we come before You with hope and with fervent prayers for our State, nation, and the world. Hear the concerns of our hearts and minds in this very hour. As this Assembly convenes, pour out an abundant measure of Your grace and blessing. Let each one be filled with wisdom, courage, energy and insight, and all the good gifts and graces they need for the work at hand. Especially grant them wisdom and forbearance in making budget decisions. Bless the work of all staff people. Thank You for all they do, and especially for those whose work goes unnoticed but contributes to the whole. If any are discouraged, fill

them with hope. If any are weary or feeling unwell, restore to them strength and health. Comfort any who mourn, and be a near and loving presence to all. Preserve and protect their loved ones and all they hold dear. We continue to pray for the people of Ukraine. Deliver them from violence, and may there be peace and justice in the world. In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Amen.

Visitors are invited to join the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

A quorum being present the Clerk will read the Journal of Sunday, March 13th.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Mr. Speaker, I move to dispense with the further reading of the Journal of Sunday, March 13th and ask that the same stand approved.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Without objection, so ordered.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, those who are in the Chambers, as well as those who are remote and in their offices, Happy Monday, and to all of our guests that are in the Chambers, and staff as well. I would like to share a quote today from a young lady who I think had no idea how

prolific her words would be. It's none other than Anne Frank who was a German diarist of Jewish heritage. She stayed for two years hiding in a home during the German occupation of the Netherlands during World War II. Her words for us today, Mr. Speaker, *How wonderful it is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.* Again, Mr. Speaker, those comments are -- words are from Anne Frank. I get emotional about her every time I think about her having had the opportunity to see the facility where she stayed in for two years while men fought.

Now I would like to advise my colleagues that you have on your desk a main Calendar with 29 new bills on it and an A-Calendar. Mr. Speaker, if you could please advance the A-Calendar.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On a motion by Mrs. Peoples-Stokes, the A-Calendar is advanced.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, sir. We will be taking up our principal work today from the Assembly's budget resolution which is on the A-Calendar, and I'm going to ask colleagues for their patience and cooperation during today's proceedings. We must be willing to hear from and listen to other's thought processes during this conversation, and we are fortunate to have our esteemed Chair of the Ways and Means Committee in the Chambers. So that's pretty much a general outline, Mr. Speaker, so if you have any housekeeping, now would be a great time to do that.

Thank you, sir.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Certainly.

On a motion by Mr. Lavine, page 23, Calendar No. 125, Bill No. 3409, amendments are received and adopted.

On a motion by Mr. Gottfried, page 42, Calendar No. 295, Bill No. 7363, amendments are received and adopted.

On the A-Calendar, Assembly No. 644, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 644, Mr. Heastie. Assembly Resolution in response to the 2022-2023 Executive Budget submission (Bill Nos. A9000-A, A.9001, A.9002, A.9003-A, A.9004-A, A.9005-A, A.9006-A, A.9007-A, A.9008-A, and A.9009-A) to be adopted as legislation expressing the position of the New York State Assembly relating to the 2022-2023 New York State Budget.

MR. RA: Explanation, please.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: An explanation is requested, Ms. Weinstein.

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's been awhile. Good afternoon, colleagues. We received the Executive Budget on January 18th and since that time, we've held a series of 13 public hearings jointly with the Senate to receive feedback from State agency heads, advocates, and the public at-large. These hearings frequently lasted well into the night, and I'd like to thank members from both sides of the aisle for their participation and attention to their -- to that process.

We also met in a public forum to discuss economic and revenue projections and later reached consensus on revenues with the Division of Budget and the Senate Finance Committee.

Each of these steps fulfil our statutory obligations with respect to our State's budget-making process, and with that I'm happy to join you today as we take another step toward the timely adoption of the State Budget for the 2023 Fiscal Year in considering this response of the Executive Budget. We come into this budget in a very different position than we did during the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our businesses are opening, children are back at school, and 86 percent of our working age population has become vaccinated. Owe it to Federal aid, financial market performance and revisions to our Tax Code that we advanced as part of last year's budget, our State's revenue picture has improved dramatically.

In giving credit where credit is due, the starting place established under this Executive Budget is vastly different than much of what we've seen over the past decade. The Governor's budget honored our commitment to continue to pay down Foundation Aid and provided meaningful investments in the staffing and operations of the health and mental hygiene sector. The Governor's budget also restored many of the long-standing priorities of the Legislature while avoiding unnecessary cuts to local governments. The budget of the Majority adopts most of the Governor's framework and builds on it accordingly.

As to the Assembly proposals, I'm going to go

through a few of the highlights and I'm sure we'll have some continued discussion as we move forward on this resolution. The Assembly proposes an All Funds Budget of \$226.4 billion for State Fiscal Year 2022-'23, which is \$7.9 billion or 3.6 percent over the Executive proposal. All Funds receipts under the Assembly proposal are projected at \$213.6 billion, an increase of \$1.9 billion over the Executive estimate, and a decrease of \$30.3 billion or 12.4 percent below the current fiscal year. The Assembly projects that General Funds spending will total \$103 billion, which is \$5.5 billion over the Executive proposal, and this represents an increase of \$12.4 billion or 13.6 percent from Fiscal Year 2021-'22's estimated levels.

As to revenues, the Assembly Financial Plan assumes \$1.2 billion in reestimates of State revenues, and accepts the Governor -- the Executive proposal of \$2.2 billion for homeowner tax rebate credit and acceleration of the middle-class tax cuts and tax cuts for small businesses. The Assembly proposes a series of new tax cuts and enhanced credits to provide inflationary relief for families and support small businesses, including a 25 percent increase in advance payment of EITC benefits, an increase in the child tax credit.

In the child care area, the Assembly proposal provides \$3 billion in additional child care spending to increase eligibility for subsidized child care to 400 percent of the Federal poverty level, support worker wages and support other provider assistance, and provide capital funding to support the expansion of access to child care with an emphasis on child care deserts.

In the Health and Mental Hygiene area, the Assembly provides over \$5.9 billion in support of our Health and Human Services infrastructure, including fair pay for home care workers, an increase in the Human Services COLA to 11 percent, wage increases to other health care workers, and \$1 billion for safety net and major public hospitals. In the Housing area, the Assembly provides over \$1.7 billion in housing capital over the Governor to promote home ownership and the building of equity. We also provide \$2 billion in payments to tenants and landlords and homeowners; these are under the ERAP, LRAP and HAF Program, and a few others. We have \$35 million for the Homeowner Protection Program to help homeowners facing potential foreclosure and \$50 million for legal representation for eviction proceedings.

In Higher Education, the Assembly provides over \$911 million in operating assistance for Higher Education, including general increases in operating support for SUNY and CUNY and their community colleges, and an increase in minimum and maximum TAP awards. The Assembly also provides a multi-year commitment to SUNY, CUNY, and private colleges for their capital expenses. In Education, we provide a \$1.6 billion increase to support the second year of the three year phase-in of the Foundation Aid formula, and we provide an additional \$150 million to Universal Pre-K funding. And lastly, the Assembly also provides an additional \$1 billion over the Governor for the Environmental Bond Act, \$500 million for utility arrears for New Yorkers, and \$150 million in increased AIM

payments above the Governor.

So with that short summary, I'd be happy to take some questions.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Ra.

MR. RA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will Chair Weinstein yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Certainly.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The sponsor yields.

MR. RA: Great. Thank you very much to our Chair, thank you for the thorough explanation. I do still have plenty of questions that I want to get on the record, but I appreciate that overview of this plan. So I want to start with kind of those top line numbers you gave us --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. RA: -- the All Funds spending numbers and how it compares to the Executive, but if we could break that down in terms of General Funds, State funds, and State Operating Funds.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Certainly. So the General Fund, \$103 billion, an increase of \$5.5 billion or 5.6 percent over the Executive, and it's an increase of \$12.4 billion or 13.6 percent over the current Fiscal Year 2021-'22. In terms of State Operating Funds, \$127 billion, which is an increase of \$6.2 billion or 5.1 percent over the Executive, and that represents an increase of \$11.8 billion or 10.3 percent over our current fiscal year. In terms of State Funds, \$143.3 billion, which represents an increase of \$6.3 billion or 4.6 percent

over the Executive, and this is an increase of \$14.6 billion or 11.3 percent over the State Fiscal Year of 2021-'22. And finally in terms of All Funds, this represents -- we represent -- this resolution represents \$226.4 billion, an increase of \$7.9 billion or 3.6 percent over the Executive, and this is an increase of \$13.4 billion or 6.3 percent over Fiscal Year '21-'22.

MR. RA: Great, thank you very much. So with regard to our State Operating Funds spending, as you know for many years the prior Governor and many of his budgets we tried to stick to a 2 percent number, and I know that the Executive proposal was at about I think a little over 3 percent in her proposal, and you said this one would be, what'd you say, 10.3 percent?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. RA: Okay, so quite -- we went way past that 2 percent number and actually I believe it's even -- we're even past it if we compared it just to the Governor's proposal. So I guess my question there then is, you know, we're all well aware that last year's budget as well as this year's budget we have -- we have a lot of Federal money that came in last year from the Federal government. We've obviously had a lot of Federal money overall for specific areas, but we had this kind of unfettered Federal money that came in last year and certainly, all that Federal money has driven up our All Funds spending, but my concern is are we doing enough and what does this budget do to make sure that as we get into the outyears, we're able to suspend this level of State spending?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, first of all, the \$2 billion that was pandemic money that was set aside was not calculated as part of -- we put -- it wasn't lined out in the Executive Budget so that when that's added that adds -- it takes into account some of that percentage increase.

MR. RA: So the Governor's baseline number is actually \$2 billion higher.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct. Yes, yes. So that's, you know, that's just the first thing I just wanted to mention.

MR. RA: Okay.

MS. WEINSTEIN: The other thing is that we do think that there is a continued improving economy. We don't know if they'll be additional Federal aid. We think there's a chance that we may have that, and we feel pretty confident that we can move forward and that we will be able to sustain the expenses that are year-to-year expenses going forward.

MR. RA: Okay. And, you know, as -- as you mentioned earlier, the additional money that came from the revenue consensus hearing, and I would just state for my colleague, I think we always enjoy hearing from the experts. I don't know how many of our colleagues watched that hearing but, you know, we are -- we were I guess really at the beginning of the conflict that we're now seeing in the Ukraine at that time and -- and the original Executive Budget proposal was really prior to that, but that was certainly an issue that was brought up by many of the experts, as well as the members of

something that might be a reason for caution.

So I do want to get into, you know, I think one of the major differences in this proposal versus, you know, in terms of the top line of it versus the Executive is with regard to Reserve Funds, and the Governor has proposed to put money into Reserve Funds. I see that Majority appears to be utilizing a lot of that money to account for this increase in spending. So can you detail how much money is being put, that the Governor has proposed, in Reserve Funds would be used as spending in this plan?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do use a portion of that Reserve money. It would still leave \$4. -- just shy of -- it would leave just -- just shy of \$5 billion in the Reserves in the economic uncertainty area. The Governor did have a little -- had under \$10- there. We do feel that we can move forward with that number.

MR. RA: Okay. So it's a little over \$5 billion, though, less is being left in that fund than the Governor's proposing, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes; a little under \$5-.

MR. RA: Okay. And, you know, as we have, you know, I think on this side of the aisle, you know, talked about for years trying to invest in our Reserves, I know there are certainly concerns that I have with, in particular, the Economic Uncertainties Fund because it's a little more uninhibited than our other reserve funds in terms of the ability to take money out, you know, without, you know, repayment type provisions as well as just the general

transparency of it. But what about this budget in terms of the other Reserve Funds, the Rainy Day Reserve and Tax Stabilization Reserve, how much is proposed?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do not -- we do not -- we leave the Rainy Day proposal in place, so that's 7- -- that's 4.271- which was what the Executive had. There -- I think that's really the only change that -- and there are, you know, other funds as you mentioned. There's the Settlement Fund, we do not adjust the Governor's number of \$1.741-. We leave the Reserve, the timing of the PITs at 7.6 billion, we leave that the same. The debt management number, \$1.35 -- 335-; we agree with the Governor. So it's really just the Reserve for Economic Uncertainty where we differ with the Executive.

MR. RA: Okay. And there is also kind of a -- a piece with regard to Reserves, though, that the Governor is proposing that is rejected, that's the proposal that would increase the maximum allowable balance and deposit amounts to the Rainy Day Reserve Fund; can you explain why the Majority is rejecting that proposal?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We don't really need to move it to the Rainy Day Fund. We think it's okay to keep it in the General Fund.

MR. RA: But my understanding is that, I mean, what that really does is just increase the allowable deposits, you know, and I think the Executive smartly is trying to prepare for when the day comes that our tax receipts aren't coming in so strong. I think, in

particular, when you're looking at this level of a budget and the increase in State spending, I think it's important that we start to build up that number. It's something that we've talked about on this side of the aisle and certainly the Comptroller has cautioned the Legislature about, as well.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, the reason why we have this extra money available in the General Fund and that the Governor had proposed transferring it to the Rainy Day Fund is because our economic -- our revenues are getting stronger, our PIT increases -- PIT is increasing based in large part on the tax changes, the progressive tax changes we enacted last year coming out of COVID. We have -- we're seeing a stronger economy and we think that it's appropriate to leave these funds in the General Fund and not transfer them out.

MR. RA: So lastly on the spending side, what are the outyear surplus or deficit projections for the coming years 2024, '25, and '26?

(Pause)

MS. WEINSTEIN: So in next year -- next year we would project that the Economic Uncertainties would be \$1.361 billion, and we would still have a Reserve of \$4.712 billion. But we -- we would be using the Reserve -- the Rainy Day Reserve numbers to help advance some of the proposals that we have in this budget.

MR. RA: What I'm asking actually is what -- if this plan were adopted, do we have outyear numbers in terms of is -- are

we looking at a potential deficit or surplus in the outyears if this was proposed, or are we balanced? I know the Executive, you know, projected really and it was something that many were excited about, right, because we haven't really seen that many times in the past, the Executive was projecting a balanced budget way out into the outyears. So do we project if this were adopted we would have a balanced budget?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We project this year and certainly next year that we'd be balanced.

MR. RA: Do we have numbers for 2025 or '26?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We didn't really go that -- go that far out. I know that the Governor went beyond even the five year to the '27, but we are looking at this budget and next -- next year's budget.

MR. RA: Okay. Thank you. And I would, again, you know, say that that is where a lot of the concern is with this -- with this spending.

Moving on to debt. According to the Comptroller, New York is the second most indebted state behind California and with our current budget surplus it might be wise to address the growing level of debt. So my first question there is how much debt outstanding does this budget account for in this fiscal year?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We are -- we are \$150 million above the Executive. The Executive is at \$69.270 billion and we're at \$69.420 billion; so it's a .21 percent increase.

MR. RA: And am I correct that that number does not include the debt that over the last few budgets had been excluded?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. RA: Okay. Do we know how much of that debt is -- is out there?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Hold on one moment.

(Pause)

Well, the --

(Buzzer going off)

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Ra, are you going to take another 15?

MR. RA: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Proceed.

(Pause)

MS. WEINSTEIN: So the outstanding debt cap is \$60 -- 60.244 billion. The debt outstanding since the Act of 2000 is \$49.65 billion and the Assembly debt outstanding remaining under the cap would be \$11.70 billion.

MR. RA: Yeah, so those are, you know, the space we have under the debt cap, but just like the previous number, correct, this doesn't include that -- what I'm asking is if we have a number. The prior Governor made a point in the last two budgets of excluding debt from -- from our debt cap and that debt, as a result, is not in our debt numbers and not, you know, calculated as we look at the outyears of what we have under the debt cap. So I'm wondering if we have a

number as to how much of that debt was issued that is excluded.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure. Okay, I think I got it now. So under 2021, we excluded \$8.865 billion. We act -- in 2022 Fiscal Year we exclude -- we excluded actually \$4.535 billion. We project -- well, I guess the total debt cap would then come up to \$17- -- just under \$18 billion, \$17.966-. And the following year we go down to \$17.53-. It continues to go down, \$17.75 million, then \$16.547 billion and continues in 2017 [sic] may go down to \$15.458 billion.

MR. RA: Thank you. So in terms of the debt cap in the outyears, what year do we get the closest to hitting the debt cap and how much is available?

MS. WEINSTEIN: According to our plan, once we get to 2027 the remaining capacity is projected to be at \$72 million.

MR. RA: Okay, and what year is that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: 2027.

MR. RA: Okay, thank you. So lastly with regard to, well, debt and the like really, this plan rejects the proposal for the short-term liquidity from the Executive, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, correct.

MR. RA: Thank you. So I'm going to move along to the tax side of things --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. RA: -- and, you know, I think we're all happy to see the proposals for tax reductions by \$5.7 billion over two years, which is an increase of \$2.3 billion more than the Governor's

proposal. And, you know, there are some good proposals here. One I know that my colleague right in front of me has talked about for years and that's with regard to the Earned Income Tax Credit and making it available, you know, for regular payments and all of that. But as we have talked about for years, you know, taxes in the State are an issue. They're particularly something that is -- we're talking a lot about right now with inflation with rising gas prices.

So I want to talk a little bit about that issue and what measures, if any, are proposed specifically to try to fight inflation and deal with these types of cost that, you know, every day middle-class working class people are dealing with as a result of -- of these increased costs. So do you believe that these proposed tax cuts in this budget are going to provide sufficient and immediate relief to those taxpayers?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, we do. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we speed up the middle-class tax credit. We have the real property tax -- real property -- \$2.2 billion real property tax credit. We, as you mentioned, we -- the EITC credit will be advanceable, three-quarters of it, and (inaudible) of 25 percent for each of three -- three quarters. We increase, we double the child tax credit for individuals with children. We actually expand that to cover -- remove the restriction that it be only for children over age four. And we, importantly, some of the issues facing our constituents with higher utility bills, we have \$500 million to support the payment of utility arrears. All of this is in addition to some of the Federal support

that's available both for utility bills, broadband, and other -- other payments that families have been receiving.

MR. RA: Thank you. Do we have any idea kind of in the aggregate what, you know, this package of different, you know, tax cuts and programs might mean for -- for an average homeowner? One of the things that, you know, with regard to inflation, it's been estimated, you know, inflation -- inflation is nearly at 8 percent. It's been estimated that the average household, you know, is basically hitting with -- hit with between \$296 to \$423 each month. So do we have any idea what the average homeowner might expect to see in terms of relief under these plans in the aggregate?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Obviously there's no average family, so I could just give you some -- some numbers of like -- so for the homeowner tax rebate credit, the \$2.2 billion, Statewide the average benefit would be \$866 average benefit. Because New York City has a different kind of property tax out of New York City, the average benefit would be just under \$1,000; it would be \$969.

MR. RA: Annually, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Annually, yes. The EITC and the Child Tax Credit, depending on what you think an average family is, but let's say a family with an income of \$20,000 would be -- you would receive \$527 under our plan with one child. Married with two children, just under \$1,000 and it would go on depending on the number of children and whether it's one parent, two parents. Those are a couple of the big ones. The acceleration of the middle-class tax

cut would result in from, I think about \$160 to just under \$300 depending, again, on the -- on the income of the family. I think that in terms of the utility arrears, that would obviously depend on the amount of arrears and it's yet -- the mechanics of that program are yet to be designed. We asked the PSC to work to help design a program that builds on the -- builds on the HEAP program and the other kinds of programs, but I think those are the major proposals going forward.

Also, you know, not only are these tax -- this tax relief help families, but also some of the additions that we have in the budget. For example, for health care workers, home health care workers it would be an increase of the minimum wage for home health care workers from our current minimum wage to \$22.50 an hour. There are bonuses for some health care workers. There's a salary increase, 11 percent, as I mentioned COLA increase for many of the Human Services workers. There's child care eligibility increase now to the 400 percent, higher percentages going to local governments which may reduce the need for -- could potentially reduce property taxes. So there's an awful lot in here for many, many of New York's residents.

MR. RA: Thank you. So I want to get into one of those particular proposals. As I mentioned earlier, the enhancement of the Earned Income Tax Credit has been a position championed by our Conference for several years and I'm glad to see the inclusion here. The Majority's proposal increases the current amount from 30 percent to 37.5 percent of the Federal credit. I'm just wondering if

you have any thoughts or can tell us where that number came from and whether there was any consideration with going to 45 percent as has been reflected in legislation that we've proposed in the past.

MS. WEINSTEIN: It -- it does come out to be a 25 percent increase. We expand the eligibility and I think importantly, as I mentioned, our colleague has been an advocate of advancing that -- that payment and as I mentioned, it would be advanceable in three different quarters. And then the final quarter being determined once the taxpayer files their return.

MR. RA: Okay, and there's I know within this a provision that would allow people without a Social -- without Social Security Numbers to claim this State Earned Income Tax Credit despite being prohibited from claiming the credit at the Federal level. Do we have any data that -- in terms of how many taxpayers without a Social Security Number would be eligible to claim this credit if this budget were enacted?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. So these would be people who have a Tax Identification Number would become eligible for the State EITC. You still have to earn income and file a tax return in order to receive the credit, and we estimate approximately 100,000 additional taxpayers would qualify.

MR. RA: Thank you. Thank you -- thank you, Chair.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. RA: Mr. Speaker, on -- on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the bill, sir.

MR. RA: Okay. Thank you very much. You know, there's a lot in -- in this proposed one-House budget in terms of spending, a lot of programs we've heard about for years, and a lot of -- a lot of, frankly, good things. But as I said, you know, when we look at the last few years, a lot of people I think, you know, saw the jump in spending last year and said, *Hey, we got all this money from the Federal government*, you know, we're in the middle of a pandemic, we needed to get money out, and absolutely that was the case. And we did things to help our homeowners and help businesses and help renters, and that stuff is certainly still important, but I want to just go back to what I talked about in the beginning in terms of, you know, our Reserves. Our Comptroller has cautioned us for years with regard to Reserves, with regard to making sure that we can cover a shortfall. And my colleagues who have been here for awhile that maybe came in around the time I did after the 2010 election, that budget the Governor put forth trying to close a huge budget deficit. And one of the reasons why we're in that situation and then were again in that situation two years ago of potentially having to cut \$10 billion was that we don't have money stocked away in these Reserve Funds.

So when you're looking at not making sure that's there for an economic downturn, when you're looking at the situation that's unfolding in this world right now, to go over a 10 percent increase in State spending, I'm not even talking about the Federal money that we know that is not going to be there in the future, but in

State spending, I'm not sure it's sustainable and at some point that's going to fall down on the heads of the taxpayers in New York State.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Smullen.

MR. SMULLEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the sponsor yield, please?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The sponsor yields, sir.

MR. SMULLEN: Thank you very much, Chair Weinstein. I wanted to continue what my colleague was discussing having to do with debt that the State is incurring in this budget and discuss its long-term implications, and then find out what the intent of the Legislature in this resolution is to spend that money. I'm referring to the Environmental Bond Act of 2022. Can you -- can you reflect on how we've gone from \$3 billion to \$4 billion to now to \$5 billion in this resolution?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, we -- first of all the, you know, that would first go to the -- the voters, as you know, because of the economic condition we did not -- it was not on the ballot so at first it would go to the voters in November and the plan to -- we don't have a discrete plan how to spend it. It would be spent over a number of

years. We went a billion over the Governor's recommendation. We think that there are a tremendous number of projects that would qualify and it would be \$5 billion over the period of time that the Bond Act would be -- would be funding programs.

MR. SMULLEN: And currently, the debt, the State debt is somewhere around \$69 billion. This authorization for increased debt would take that number up to at least \$74 billion?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We are just \$150 million above the Governor.

MR. SMULLEN: Oh no, I'm sorry. I'm talking about aggregate State debt that we have to pay back. In this case, this -- this additional bond that would be authorized, would that be paid back over 30 years?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Because, you know, we authorize the Bond Act, but until the money is spent we're not -- there's no plan for it yet so it's not accounted for in -- in the figures that --

MR. SMULLEN: But will it be in the future prospectively going forward?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, hopefully -- hopefully it will be. Hopefully it will be adopted by the voters and we'll -- we'll then be able to, as a Legislature and with the Executive come up with a plan of how to spend those dollars.

MR. SMULLEN: Well certainly, we want to make the case to the voters as to whatever your opinion of the bond is, but what would the approximate, the total payback -- we want to borrow

\$5 billion, what are we going to have to pay back over, say, 30 years to pay for these projects that are going to be authorized for this spending?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Right now in the Capital Plan there isn't -- it's really -- the Bond Act has to get approved. There's no spending on that lined out over the next five years. We would have to then once we have the approval to spend up to the \$5 billion we would then come back and figure out and address how we want to spend that money, whether we want to spend all of it or just a small portion of it. It's an authorization of the bond, it's not the -- the State isn't writing the check. I believe that we will want to spend it all, but there is no plan yet how to spend that.

MR. SMULLEN: Well I certainly think, you know, the voters need to decide that. But as we look at this -- the proposed spending and the language in the -- in the resolution, how do you define environmental justice? I see a couple billion dollars that's going towards environmental justice.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, I think it's areas that have been harmed by the environment. The areas, there are numerous studies that show that asthma rates are increased in communities where there is smog, truck traffic. There are other areas that have been disadvantaged. There was a recent report in *The New York Times* about areas, the amount of oxygen in areas where in wealthier areas there were trees that generated more oxygen and communities that were more disadvantaged in New York City, economically

disadvantaged had fewer trees, poorer air quality. So those are a couple of examples of the kind of issues that would -- that you could talk about as environmental equity issues.

MR. SMULLEN: So an environmental justice community perhaps would not include an area such as mine where there are lots of trees, but decaying infrastructure?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Actually DEC just released a map showing the areas that would -- are economically disadvantaged in terms of climate, so -- and it's out for public comment now. I'd be happy to share the link with you after we finish speaking.

MR. SMULLEN: Well certainly, that -- certainly thank you for that. You know, as I look through the various areas that we're trying to do this, one of them is to increase the amount of open land that's conserved. Do you think that we need more than 19 percent of land in New York State affected by the State, State-influenced process for the land usage?

MS. WEINSTEIN: In this particular area we've, based on input from our Environmental Conservation Chair, Assemblyman Englebright, this is something that are -- that we are in our House, my colleagues support.

MR. SMULLEN: Certainly, thank you for that. As we look at the other initiatives for hard infrastructure -- infrastructure that are in this act, what is the approximate percentage that's programmed to go to Upstate New York? I just did some back of the envelope calculations after reviewing this and it looks about 80

percent of it is going to go to New York City areas. How much do you think is going to go to, per capita, to each of the citizens in the State?

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, as I mentioned, it's not yet delineated so that it's -- every part of our State is eligible for funding.

MR. SMULLEN: Every part is eligible for the \$5 billion in funding here, and then --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Because we don't have a plan yet how to spend it.

MR. SMULLEN: But we're going to -- but we're certainly going to make one and then we're going to come back to this Body, as you mentioned, and vote on it individually for each of the projects or for in the general, fund by fund?

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, we have, for example, the Water Infrastructure Bond Act, we're still -- we're first in the fourth year and still spending money of that and we still have more funds left to spend, so it does take time for that funding to get allocated, approved, designated for areas and next year if this Bond Act passes we'll probably have some further discussion on how to spend some of that money.

MR. SMULLEN: Well, thank you very much, Chair.
Mr. Speaker, on the resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the resolution,
sir.

MR. SMULLEN: So what I see we have here is a bond act that's going to obligate up to \$5 billion which is going to add to the aggregate debt that New York State is required to pay back. Typically, debt like this, I don't know what the interest rate will be for New York State paid back over 30 years. My son who is 12 years old today will be 42 years old when this money is actually paid back in full to the institutions from which it's borrowed. And I have some really grave concerns about why this has going from \$3 billion to \$4 billion to \$5 million [sic], especially in a budget year where we're looking at spending somewhere to the north of \$220 billion. When I first came to this Body in 2019, that's up 20-plus percent in just that short period of time. And I don't understand the rationale of adding to a State's debt load which is already the highest in the United States per capita, per citizen. And particularly, for a State spending budget which is equal to that of California which has twice the population, or equal to the States of Texas and Florida which has double the population but together have the same population as New York State.

To me, this seems to be like reckless icing on -- on a bloated cake which has to be reined in in some fashion. What's even more concerning is that the money that we have gotten from the Federal government over the past two years is also borrowed money which is claimed on the back of taxpayers through bonds that are issued with a full faith and credit of the United States government. And we, in fact, in this Body are taking a big budget from the Governor and adding more to it and then perspective adding up to

\$5 billion more of debt which must be paid out over the future.

To me, this is fiscally reckless. It's unconscionable that we're taking money right now from our citizens whose rate of inflation of 8 percent is eating up their wages every day in gas prices, in commodity prices, in food prices which they cannot afford and, in fact, we should rein our spending in and give that money back to our citizens so they can live better. Instead of a regressive inflationary tax on everyone, we ought to curb our spending, particularly for this \$5 billion green slush fund which is undefined which has to be paid back and which will further only add to the fiscal stress of New York State going forward.

I urge everyone to think about their children and their children's children who will be affected by such policies, and in a year when our tax receipts are up more than they've ever been, that that is the time to think about being prudent fiscally and to not obligate ourselves to future debt to add to an already high burden that we already have. For that reason, I will obviously be voting against this resolution and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and Madam Chair for your time.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Walsh.

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

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein yields.

MS. WALSH: That's wonderful. I just have a few questions for you, particularly related to education at least to start with. So like most industry, the education sector is facing significant labor shortages across the board, even as we revert towards pre-pandemic unemployment levels. The Governor's Executive Budget proposal provided various mechanisms to incentivize and streamline the process of on boarding more teachers to the public school system, but in this Assembly one-House bill those provisions have been removed from the budget, reinvigorating concerns that our schools won't be adequately staffed to support our children in the coming school years. What will happen if the Legislature and the Governor are unable to find a solution to the workforce challenges outside the budget? As things currently stand, do you believe that we've got adequate staffing levels in our schools to ensure that students do not experience learning loss or lower quality teaching in the forthcoming school years?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So I think that short answer on the budget language that the Executive had that we removed is -- relates not just to this subject area, but in general we've removed all policy from the budget. So it is something that we can discuss as a legislative proposal. Just -- its removal does not mean that we're necessarily in lots of places, the removal often doesn't mean that we're

opposed to the policy, but that we believe that policy is best discussed outside the budget. And as you know, we have a tremendous increase with the Foundation Aid, UPK, so we are providing additional -- we provide additional dollars in this budget for the -- for the school systems around the State, but that particular -- the particular proposal as it relates to making changes in terms of hiring, firing, is -- well, really hiring, will be discussed outside the budget.

MS. WALSH: So in your opinion, then, the absence of that particular provision of the removal from the Governor's proposal is not an indication that the Assembly isn't mindful of the teacher shortage and -- and also, there had been concerns expressed from the teachers, for example, about increasing classroom size as our kids get back into the classroom again, those problems that preexisted COVID are still -- are still there. So I welcome a chance to -- I personally think that removing policy from the budget is, generally speaking, a good idea. I just wanted to be sure that we at least have that discussion as far as -- because the budget we know is a -- is a set of priorities that we're advancing, too, so I appreciate that.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure. And that will be discussed in the Education Committee and I think a lot of -- I certainly agree with a lot of what you said about classroom size. My mom was a teacher, I heard from it -- heard about it since I was a little kid about how many kids were in the class, so something I certainly agree with you about.

MS. WALSH: And as a member of the Education

Committee, I look forward to seeing those bills. Thank you.

The next question I have does also relate to education. It has to do with the proposal regarding electrifying the school bus fleet. So the Governor's Executive Budget proposal mandates that all new school bus acquisitions on or after July 1st, 2027 must utilize electric or hydrogen-based propulsion technology. So achievement of 100 percent electric buses by 2035, but I know that -- I noted that the one-House budget did have some language to allow for a delay of the implementation of those proceedings. Could you just talk about that a little bit?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure. So the Commissioner can delay implementation of the requirement if she finds that the technology is not up to the task or if the expense is higher than the expense of diesel buses. So that's certainly -- the goal is to have the electrification of -- of the school buses but it's not a hard right line that districts will be penalized in any way based on the two factors. I mention both the expense is higher or the technology is not up to the task.

MS. WALSH: So over time -- I appreciate that. Over time, there's a sense that electrification of the school buses will provide a cost savings --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MS. WALSH: -- eventually, but does the Assembly's budget proposal provide any bridge funding for school districts so that this mandate does not negatively impact their finances in the

short-term?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Since, you know, the transportation is a reimbursable State aid expense under the -- you know, in terms of school districts, so that's where we would be seeing the reimbursement for the electrification. And -- and you're correct in saying that it's anticipated that the cost would, over time, be lower than using the -- the diesel fuels.

MS. WALSH: Speaking about buses and I think we had some discussion already today about gas prices. I was speaking with a superintendent of one of our local BOCES the other day who just alerted me to the fact that with -- with gas prices really through the roof like they are right now and if they don't moderate, fuel costs for school districts to run, particularly Upstate where there's a lot more driving in our rural areas to pick up our kids to get them to and from school. Is there anything in the budget to specifically address that concern?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you know, again, the transportation is reimbursable, right, so that -- and that does fluctuate year to year. And we do have that increase in Foundation Aid, it's over \$2 billion if you look at all the different aid, education aid to monies that we are adding above last year.

MS. WALSH: So you believe that that setup is going to be enough sufficient to address the concerns that were raised about the increase in gas costs?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do, and obviously we don't

know where gas prices will be even a month -- next week, let alone tomorrow even, let alone, you know, a month from now or the end of the school year. So we anticipate that there will be funding available.

MS. WALSH: Okay. And now, like they say, for something completely different.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Okay.

MS. WALSH: I'm going to switch completely away from education for a moment and I'd like to talk to you about a part of the budget that really stuck out for me and it has to do with a proposal that would provide free phone calls for all incarcerated individuals in State correctional facilities and would allow for a minimum of one 90 minute phone call per day. So do you know how many minutes - I don't know the answer to this, I'm asking you - do you know how many minutes per telephone call are currently afforded to individuals in custody?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Thirty minutes.

MS. WALSH: Thirty minutes, okay. So this would triple that if my math is correct, okay. How many more telephones, do you know, would have to be added to the facilities to accommodate this proposal?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We don't really know, and let me explain where --

MS. WALSH: Okay.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- how this process works. It's a contract to -- there's a contract to provide the telephone service in the

facilities and what happened is it's not just the installation of a phone. There's involvement if monitoring, not listening, monitoring but as to make sure that, for example, a victim isn't -- isn't called, that other -- that it's not being used for any kind of illicit activity. So there -- it's more than just -- more than just throwing a nickel in the phone booth for those of us old enough to remember that time, but it is the Statewide contract that will administer the program in all the facilities.

MS. WALSH: But the inmates aren't going to be receiving any kind of burner phones or cell phones to make these calls, they're all going to be at least capable of being monitored, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes.

MS. WALSH: Okay. I just saw one of my colleagues who has a background in corrections kind of giving me the eyebrows up on that one. It's a question. I mean, if there are going to be inmates that are going to be allowed triple the amount of time to make phone calls, it's -- I think it's a fair question to ask how that's going to get implemented. So the Assembly one-House includes an additional \$9.9 million for DOCS to implement this proposal. How was that \$9.9 million calculated and was this figure calculated with input from DOCS?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's a \$60 million contract over five years. So you know, again, it's a contracted out program so, you know, we don't know how much each facility, but there's generally a cost of just building up the system and whatever monitoring is going

to -- needs to happen.

MS. WALSH: So as of Friday, March 11th, last Friday, there were 1,672 inmates in Attica alone. Do you believe that DOCS facilities have the infrastructure to accommodate a large increase in volume related to use of telephones?

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, we -- we think that the contract will address those issues, whether there's a need for additional facilities within some of the correctional facilities or if what exists is sufficient. There's not been a sort of correction facility by facility analysis yet done.

MS. WALSH: Okay.

MS. WEINSTEIN: And, you know, the population changes obviously. It's actually, obviously has gone down over the --

MS. WALSH: It's decreased.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- past handful of years.

MS. WALSH: Mm-hmm. So the implementation of this initiative is supposed to be done by April 1st, 2023, affording about a year to implement the proposal. Do you believe that that's enough time for this contract to ensure compliance in all 44 of its facilities?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes; yes, we do.

MS. WALSH: Okay, very good. Thank you so, much --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MS. WALSH: -- Chair Weinstein.

Mr. Speaker, on the resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the resolution, Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: As always, I appreciate the Chair's willingness to entertain questions, you know, that cover really the whole gambit. This one-House budget is vast, you know, it's vast in scope. We were briefed on it this morning by our excellent staff and -- but there's still a lot to dig into. Those were things that just kind of jumped out at me.

My overall feeling about the one-House budget, though, is as one of my colleagues recently said, it's just -- it can be summed up in three words: It's too much spending. It's too much spending. And it seems to me rather tone deaf considering the difficulties that average New Yorkers are facing in terms of what life costs for them right now. And, you know, at one point there was an answer given in response to a question that said, you know, there was more money to spend. Well, just because there is more money to spend doesn't mean that we should spend it. I'm grateful that there have been some initiatives put into place to give some tax relief but, you know, a budget that was \$212 billion last year that is proposed to be \$226 billion the following year, is -- it's too much spending. It is too much spending. I can't support it. There are obviously things in the one-House bill that I love that I think are great, but overall it's too much. I think that we could have done a far, far better job to rein it in and this type of bloated spending is really not in the best interest of

New Yorkers overall and I can't support it for that reason. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you.

Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Chairwoman yield for a couple questions?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. SMITH: Thank you so much. So back to education --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. SMITH: -- just a few questions here. So the proposal I'm seeing has, in the Assembly one-House, has the Foundation Aid phased in not this coming school year but the following school year. So on aggregate, do we know how much school districts are still owed for their Foundation Aid apportionment?

MS. WEINSTEIN: After we adopt this budget, \$1.5 billion.

MR. SMITH: Okay. Now, do you know, and this is just a question about the spending, could we have possibly used discretionary Federal funds provided to the State in the American Rescue Plan Act to possibly accelerate the phase-in? Is that something that was permitted?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We have been using Federal --

we have been using Federal money certainly the first year of the Foundation Aid, so we are continuing to draw down that money as, you know, that money, we were given several years to spend that money so -- but it will be an expense that we will have to build into the budget going forward.

MR. SMITH: Okay. Now, the State Education Department has actually called on a study on the components of the Foundation Aid formula and now as we move to fully fund the formula, I think this study is imperative that we actually conduct this study to see what we can do. But I didn't see any kind of study included in the Assembly one-House. Would you agree that on the whole and as we go forward that it would be actually necessary and probably prudent that we study this sooner rather than later? Is that something --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you know, I think what we really want to do is fully fund Foundation Aid, then we'll be able to look and see if there are additional needs or whether that -- the fully funding of Foundation Aid meets the needs of the district. And as you know well, Mr. Smith, the -- there are many -- there are other avenues of revenues for school districts. So it's not just the Foundation Aid. And I did mention that we had \$150 million above the Governor for Universal Pre-K. I talked with Assemblywoman Walsh about the transportation funds. There are other designated funds that also -- we also have an increase that go to the school, many of the school districts.

MR. SMITH: Absolutely, and I think that's something welcome especially in the suburbs where I come from, the people I represent, where, you know, Foundation Aid and the other reimbursable needs are needed to offset the local property tax investment which is significant. So I think everybody appreciates that, absolutely.

So now if I can move on to the Special Act Schools. Now, one thing that -- as we speak to providers of the 853 Schools and the 4410 Schools and other special education programs, we find that there's trouble being competitive with salaries. And Ms. Walsh mentioned trying to get additional funds for a pending teacher shortage, substitute teacher shortage. So my question, you know, I'm glad to see that the Majority included an enrollment adjustment factor to be applied to the tuition reconciliation process for these providers if their enrollment changes by 5 percent or more; however, you know, rather than lowering the enrollment adjustment factor from the current 7.5 percent to 5 percent for one year, why are we not extending this provision permanently so that special education schools have greater financial predictability? Is that something maybe going forward we can look to make permanent?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Right, certainly we can have those discussions as -- as we move forward. We talked about the teacher retention or salary. Those -- the teachers and those, the 553 [sic] schools, the 4410 schools, they are under our proposal will have a 11 percent increase in salary. We build on the Governor's 5 percent.

It's just part of the Governor's proposal so that should have, you know, by having a salary increase it helps retain existing teachers but it also becomes an incentive for educational personnel to take a job in the first place.

MR. SMITH: Okay great, and that actually goes into my next question because I was very happy to see that. I guess, would that be part of \$23.8 million Cost of Living Adjustment, is that what we're talking about? For deaf and blind schools, because I see that that's --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. SMITH: Okay. Yeah, I think that's definitely welcome at this time and as we continue to try to provide the best educational opportunities. Now, as we're talking about this Cost of Living Adjustment, do we know at this time is that going to be a one-year program or is that something that we can kind of count on because I know our schools are really, as I think we all know, these schools are real in dire need of this funding.

MS. WEINSTEIN: So going forward, we will be -- the special ed school district increases will go along with increases in general ed funding so as the General Fund increases, those special ed schools will increase also.

MR. SMITH: Okay, okay. And I'm hoping that going forward in the enacted budget and future budgets that we can definitely build on that because I think that's something that we can all agree on to -- to give that additional. My final question with respect

to mental health in schools, because this has been, you know, a topic especially exacerbated by the pandemic. The Governor's Executive Budget proposal included \$100 million for this purpose through the Recovs Grant Program, and the Assembly one-House budget proposed today includes an additional \$40 million to ensure that there are mental health supports in every school district Statewide. With respect to that program, is there anything that includes BOCES programs as being eligible for that funding because as we found -- as we find across the State, BOCES is actually dealing with a number of, you know, a lot of our students and providing those services as well and we want to make sure that those programs are also included in any increase.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Not -- there's nothing specifically for BOCES, though obviously those students also live within a school district so that there would be additional funding in that school district.

MR. SMITH: Okay, that's great. So maybe going forward we can maybe include that -- or make it a little bit more clear because I think the intention is there and as you mentioned, students do have home schooled districts. All right. Thank you so much, Chairwoman. No further questions. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Gallahan.

MR. GALLAHAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the sponsor yield?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will

you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The sponsor yields, sir.

MR. GALLAHAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

My questions pertain to gaming. In 2017, the Seneca Nation stopped remitting payments to the State over a dispute on the language in their contract -- it was a compact, actually. This dispute went into arbitration and recently the Seneca Nation announced it's dropping its legal battle with New York and will begin making payments to the State held in escrow throughout the dispute over their claims revenue. So my question is how much is owed New York State and how much is owed the municipalities?

(Pause)

MS. WEINSTEIN: For the State, I believe it's over \$500 million.

MR. GALLAHAN: And the municipalities?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I think that the number includes the municipalities. But we get the money and then distribute it.

MR. GALLAHAN: Right, correct. Thank you very much. What is the status of this funding and when do you anticipate the State making the locals whole?

MS. WEINSTEIN: In terms of a date, that we can't do. We know that the money will be available -- potentially available with -- because the money is in escrow so they're paying it into an

escrow fund. But in terms of a date, that I can't tell you.

MR. GALLAHAN: Okay, I see. The Assembly one-House allows for requests for additional sports wagering licenses to be issued and I'd like to know is the tax rate the same as the current providers or will it change depending on how many licenses are actually issued?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We are not changing any of the rates, so the Commission will, depending on proposals that come forward, the Commission will make a determination of the additional licenses.

MR. GALLAHAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.
On the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the bill, sir.

MR. GALLAHAN: Thank you. Well, I certainly appreciate all the hard work and thought that went into this -- this budget. Unfortunately -- there's a lot of things in the budget that I like but unfortunately, this is an irresponsible budget. A 10 percent increase, a 10 percent increase. As town supervisor, I was held to a 2 percent tax increase and abided by that most every year, and in 2014 I actually lowered taxes. But if you don't -- and with a county the same, Ontario County. But if you do not abide by the 2 percent tax, you're penalized. And in many cases, you're penalized with funding, particularly related to Raise the Age.

So our counties, towns, villages all try to abide by the 2 percent tax cap, but we stand here and say, *Well, we're going to go*

10 percent in a year when we have -- we're flush with cash. Now is the time to start saving our taxpayers' money. Now is the time to enact a responsible budget at 2 percent or under or cut taxes, not increase 10 percent. I can't support this -- this -- this budget and I will be voting in the negative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Lawler.

MR. LAWLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the resolution.

You know, growing up I used to stay with my grandmother a lot and we used to watch *The Price is Right* every day, and when I look at this budget all I can think about is Rod Roddy saying, "You're the next contestant on *The Price is Right*, come on down." And I think to Oprah Winfrey when she gave away a car to everybody in the audience, "You get a car, no you get a car, you get a car." That's what this budget is, everybody and their mother gets something and, yet, the taxpayers are getting hosed.

You know, two years ago the enacted budget was \$178 billion. Last year, the enacted budget was \$212 billion, a \$35 billion increase year over year. The Governor on her 30 day amendments has proposed a \$218 billion, up \$6- from last year. And this Body is proposing a \$226 billion budget, up \$14- from last year. In two years, we've increased spending by \$49 billion. Now, much of it comes from the Federal government. And I said last year when we had our budget debate, what happens when the Federal funds actually

run out? Who is paying for all of this? Are we going to see massive cuts or are we going to see massive tax hikes, or a combination of both?

When we look at the current climate, we are dealing with record levels of inflation, the highest in over 40 years.

Twenty-seven percent of GDP has been spent on COVID relief and stimulus over the last two years. Now, that has largely been paid for by newly-created money from the Federal Reserve. From February 2020 to November 2021, the money supply increased by the same amount it did from July 2011 to February 2020. Is it any wonder why we are dealing with record levels of inflation? New Yorkers are struggling every day to go to work, to pick up their kids from school because gas prices are through the roof, in part because of inflation, in part because of the war raging in the Ukraine right now, and in large part because of our horrific energy policy that has been set by Federal and State elected officials.

And so the response is not to look at the long-term fiscal health of New York; no, the response is to spend, spend, spend like we never have before, \$49 billion in additional spending in just the last two years. That's what's being proposed. And I really encourage all of my colleagues to take a very hard look at what is being proposed in these budgets. Of course we want to spend more on education. Of course we want to spend more on housing and health care. Of course we want to spend more on our environment. Of course we want to spend more on public safety. But there isn't a

single program, a single line item that this budget looks at and says, *You know what? We just can't afford it.* And New Yorkers should understand this is an election year. Of course we want to give everything away. Of course we want to fully fund every possible program we can. God forbid, God forbid we actually look at the numbers and recognize that we can't afford it.

Next year when all is said and done and inflation continues to wreak havoc on our economy, when the bills start coming due and when these programs are potentially on the chopping block, New Yorkers should understand that what will happen is a choice between cutting these programs or raising taxes. And that is something that New Yorkers need to recognize in this coming election.

We cannot continue to spend money in the manner in which we do. We cannot continue to fund every program under the sun, every good intention that gets proposed in this Body and in the Body down the hall. We need to be realistic about what we're dealing with and unless we get serious about prioritizing our spending, New York will continue to suffer the fate it has over the last decade. It leads the nation in out-migration for a reason. People cannot afford to live here, they cannot afford to pay the crushing property taxes, the crushing State income taxes, the crushing business taxes. They cannot afford to operate under the burdensome regulations. As I mentioned in a debate in Committee last week, a decade ago the Senate Majority did a study on regulations. They found that New York State at the

time had over 750,000 regulations on the books. That was a decade ago. We haven't done anything to try and cut back on regulations; no, quite the opposite.

So when I see a budget proposal like this when the Governor already gave away the farm in her Executive Budget, it's a scary thought. The Majority found an additional \$8 billion in spending that was unaccounted for by the Governor. We need wholesale change in the State of New York. We cannot continue down this path with no checks and balances, one party rule, running our State into the proverbial ground, \$226 billion and no end in sight. I encourage all of my colleagues to vote no on this resolution and I encourage every New Yorker, every hard-working taxpayer out there to demand better. Demand a more accountable government. Demand a more fiscally-responsible government that actually understands basic economics and Accounting 101. Mr. Speaker, I vote no on this resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Walczyk.

MR. WALCZYK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the sponsor would yield for some questions on this resolution?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein yields, sir.

MR. WALCZYK: Madam Chair, always relish in the opportunity to dialogue with you. I did so in the public hearings which I know are very long and often adds to more advocacy forums where nobody asks for less, everyone asks for more and then you have the challenge of putting all of those things into a budget for us here today.

So I'm going to focus on Higher Education in some of my questions today and our independent colleges off the top, they've been slammed by the shutdowns and, you know, across the country but especially here, the 109 independent universities in New York State. These institutions are major economic drivers. During COVID, they've been hit particularly hard financially, especially when it comes to declines in enrollment. And some are now faced with a choice of merging with other schools or being forced to close. So I'm wondering in this budget resolution that the Majority is presenting today, is there anything in your budget that helps support these private schools?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, I believe that the major TAP increase that we're doing will, in fact, help these schools. The students will be eligible. So we are looking over a two-year period of doubling the TAP -- we have an increase this year of the base of TAP and of the maximum TAP award.

MR. WALCZYK: To assist with enrollment, how about directly for the -- for the institutions?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do have additional dollars for

capital for the non-publics, but not additional dollars in terms of operating.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. Would that be through HECap?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. WALCZYK: And, you know, many of them have come to us requesting and did so in the Higher Education Budget Hearing for Bundy Aid. I know that the Governor presented her budget with \$30 million in Bundy Aid. What does this resolution do for Bundy Aid?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We accepted the Governor's number.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. So no additional increase over the Governor's?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. WALCZYK: Thank you. Under the State University of New York, the one-House budget provides SUNY with \$200 million in additional operating support; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. WALCZYK: And what expenditures does SUNY plan to prioritize, or what do you envision that they would prioritize with this funding, is there any direction there?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's really -- it will be up to each individual college how they want to spend the money. It could be for teacher support, could be for student support, general operations.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. And that operation -- operational increase would just be spread across the board?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's based upon the current distribution to the SUNY schools so it will be proportionate the way it is now.

MR. WALCZYK: Thank you for the clarification. You're also proposing, if I'm right, a \$1.2 billion in new capital funding at SUNY?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. WALCZYK: Is there any direction in this budget resolution as to how that capital funding is going to be prioritized? Whether it's going to be -- you know, we've heard the Governor talk a lot about SUNY flagship institutions. Is there, you know, any parity between them and comprehensive universities, for example?

MS. WEINSTEIN: There isn't a breakdown in our budget, but there is a requirement that they come back to the Legislature to let us know how they plan to spend that capital money.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. So SUNY would have to come back to us with a plan?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. WALCZYK: You're also proposing to support the Governor's budget to fund community colleges at 100 percent of the amount that they've received in the 2021-2022 Budget, as well as provide an additional \$45 million in operational support; is that

correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So it is actually \$60 million but it's appropriated at 75 percent, but the idea here is to hold the schools harmless for some of the popul -- student enrollments decrease that has happened during the pandemic.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. Does -- does this fulfill the State's promise to our community colleges that they'll be funded by a third?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We are not there yet, but that is the goal as we -- as we move forward.

MR. WALCZYK: How close do we get in your budget resolution that you're presenting here today?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's -- we're about a fifth to 25 percent of the way there.

MR. WALCZYK: Okay. Under the Tuition Assistance Program which you -- you mentioned earlier, I'm reading that the Majority is proposing to dramatically increase spending on the TAP program, including increasing the maximum award to match the current tuition level of \$7,070. Is there also a proposal to increase the eligibility threshold, or will that remain the same?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We -- we don't -- at the moment we don't change the eligibility, but we do increase the minimum TAP award which is at \$500 to \$1,000 and, as you mentioned, we increase the -- over the next two years the TAP award from \$5,665 to \$7,000, just over \$7,000 which would match the maximum TAP award to

SUNY tuition.

MR. WALCZYK: And Madam Chair, I know that will be personally helpful to many of the students who currently can qualify for the Tuition Assistance Program. We -- we talked extensively over the last couple of years and certainly it came up time and again in the budget hearing this year the need for an expansion of the eligibility as well as rolling in the Excelsior Program and maybe finally ridding ourselves of that. Does your budget resolution here today get rid of the Excelsior Program and increase that eligibility threshold for TAP?

MS. WEINSTEIN: No. But as you mentioned, the Excelsior Program helps -- helps deal with people who are not eligible for -- for TAP.

MR. WALCZYK: Well, maybe to the ones who can figure out how to navigate it, but that's a discussion for a past day that we've had a number of times and I'll spare everyone for having it again today.

Final -- final question for you, Madam Chair. Funding for child care centers at SUNY institutions, the Governor has mentioned this both in her budget proposal and also in press releases recently. I just wondered will comprehensives like the fine institution SUNY Canton be eligible for child care funding?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So any campus that currently doesn't have a child care facility on campus will be eligible for the funding that the Governor has proposed.

MR. WALCZYK: Great. Thanks very much.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. WALCZYK: Mr. Speaker, on the resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the resolution, sir.

MR. WALCZYK: Last year's budget was \$213 million [sic]. That was a record, and it was a record by a lot. Governor Hochul went out and proposed a \$216 billion budget. Did I say million in the first round? Let me start that and read it back. Last year's budget was a record \$213 billion. Governor Hochul's proposed budget this year, a record \$216 billion. And in an effort to outdo the Governor, this Body with the Majority's resolution here today and the vote that we'll take up on this one-House budget soon is proposing a \$226 billion budget. It's like the Majority took gas prices and what's going on at the pump right now and took it as a personal affront and said, *You know what? We can best what's going on there.* They didn't propose big tax increases, which is wise to omit in an election year. Smart to not raise taxes.

So what does that mean? Well, it means that they're going to continue borrowing and over the continual years, you will see that New York State will get closer and closer to the Constitutional debt limit that we have. What does that sound like? Well, I mean, that might sound like fancy speak but what it really means is you're transitioning the debt and the spending from today onto our children and onto our grandchildren.

So it's great if we can talk about all of the nice things that this budget does. We went through all of those budget hearings, people asked for everything, we gave them that and then some. And I know that sounds great on Christmas. It's awesome if our children are really well-educated. It's terrible if they are very deeply indebted and can't even do anything with the education that we've given them. You've already done it to one generation, don't do it to the next.

Mr. Speaker, I vote no.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Angelino.

MR. ANGELINO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions if the sponsor will yield?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein yields, sir.

MR. ANGELINO: Well, everybody here has been talking about billions, I'll likely only talk about millions and the main area I'd like to talk about is parks, parks, rec and historic preservation and sports development. I was just curious, I read the volumes here and I saw the overall parks budget but it lacks the detail that I saw in other areas. There's are some areas that do have by name projects and programs. I was curious, are there any new New York State Parks plan in the near future?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I believe that the Executive, the

Governor did announce recently a park in the -- the State Park in the Hudson Valley area.

MR. ANGELINO: Is that also included in the Assembly budget?

MS. WEINSTEIN: If she did, we did not -- it still is -- it's still there.

MR. ANGELINO: Okay. You did not object is what I'm hearing.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. ANGELINO: Hopefully there will be a drastic increase in the maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to our current State Parks. Did that -- did those budget lines increase?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. ANGELINO: Do you know, and I see you have it now in front of you, do you know if there's any increase in funding for staffing levels of the New York State Park Police?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do not -- we did not change anything that the Executive proposed in that area so to the extent that the Governor's budget included funds, they would still be here. So the -- let me just -- the Executive did recommend \$37 million increase in State Parks funding and it does say that the increase supports salary increases, non-personnel service costs and additional staffing, 53 full-time equivalent, and 15 of those Park Rangers, and then 38 full-time equivalents would support general park operations to accommodate rising visitation.

MR. ANGELINO: Okay. So what I heard was 15 Park Rangers --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. ANGELINO: -- and 35 support personnel?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Thirty-eight, but yes.

MR. ANGELINO: Thirty-eight, okay. I couldn't hear. All right. Well, thank you. I felt obligated to ask you questions as a member of Parks and Recs Committee and also, my dad was a -- a New York State Parks Commissioner many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, on the resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the resolution, sir.

MR. ANGELINO: In all the spending that we've been talking about today, it's all billions of dollars and I'm only talking of a few millions, if that. I've read the volumes. I've seen all the programs that are included and I found several by name programs and agencies that are included in the Assembly budget and also the Governor's budget. And there's nothing in there that I found to support increasing the funding for staffing and salaries of New York State Park Police. This police agency is tasked with protecting millions of annual visitors to our State Parks, and they do everything, everything from finding lost children and pets all the way up to swift water rescue in the Niagara River at the precipice of Niagara Falls. The New York State Police -- State Park Police provide an amazing return on our investment and this small agency is the oldest New York

State Police agency and they deserve to have their ranks brought up to a level that they can protect the millions of visitors to our State Parks.

Over the past few years, this agency has been decimated, and they certainly deserve better from us. I wanted to concentrate on one tiny agency in this volumes of billions of dollars because they certainly deserve it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: Mr. Jensen.

MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the sponsor yield for a few questions regarding health care and libraries?

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: Will the sponsor yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: The sponsor yields.

MR. JENSEN: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In the one-House budget, the Majority rejected the Governor's proposed bonus for health care workers --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. JENSEN: -- and instead prioritized wage increases of about \$1.2 billion at DOH and other agencies. Will any of those funds make their way down to frontline health care workers in care settings?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. Well, you know, as you correctly indicate, we rejected the concept of a one-time bonus, instead opting for salary increase with the -- in many areas with the notion that part of what we hear is the issue is being able to both retain

and attract new workers and that an increase in salary would be more welcome than a one-time bump which, for some people at the low end of the income, could actually throw them off of some -- off a benefit cliff that they may be on right now. So I can go through -- if you want, I could go through where some of that --

MR. JENSEN: So Madam Chair --

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- some areas, or is there specific

--

MR. JENSEN: So in that \$1.2 billion, some of those funds will go down to assist care providers with recruitment and retention of care staff.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. Well, in particular in the nursing homes, there's \$50 million for -- really, it can be used for a lot of different purposes but it could be used either as a -- as a salary increase, but it's for recruitment and retention. So on the nursing home side there's the \$50 million for the home health aides. There's the 1.5 percent of -- one-and-a-half times minimum wage. There's \$200 million for other health care workers and for the State employees to not interfere with collective bargaining, those are going to be the only individuals who will be getting the actual bonuses, that's \$120 million. And then for a lot of the agencies, workers at agencies will be seeing 11 percent increase in their -- as a COLA, 11 percent COLA increase on their salaries. A lot of these agencies that have (inaudible).

MR. JENSEN: Okay. So kind of transitioning a little

bit to the proposal for fair pay for home care workers, and I think that -- I think everybody would agree that those workers are severely underpaid. Is there any concern that you have or the Majority has about the potential of compression across the care worker paradigm? So if we're now increasing the minimum wage for home care workers but not for care workers or nurses in acute care, long-term care, assisted living, is there a concern that we're going to see workers nursing -- nurses leave those other settings to go to home care and potentially create a shortage or wage compression across the board?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, we do have -- I failed to mention initially a 1 percent increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate for the hospitals so that can, and along with some of what I mentioned earlier, the \$200 million for the non-home care employees that -- all of that translates to an increase in wages.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. And so with that funding for fair pay for home care, is that one-off funding or is this going to be recurring funding that we're going to have to allocate through the budget every year as long as that minimum --

MS. WEINSTEIN: In our budget, it's -- it's recurring.

MR. JENSEN: It's recurring, okay.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. JENSEN: All right. And then my last question regarding health care is certainly with -- there's prioritization of acute care, health care modernization, long-term care, as you mentioned, but is there any dedicated funding going directly to assisted living and

helping them with some of these shortfalls that they have suffered over the past two years?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Not particularly because the assisted living is mostly non-Medicaid so -- and private pay, so that doesn't come into the formula that we have here.

MR. JENSEN: Certainly they faced even more -- they suffered a lot of the same issues that long-term care faced where they had people -- they had their Census numbers going down, they may have been people who no longer could support family members through private pay, and they also are struggling with staffing in the same way. So certainly, shouldn't we be treating all of our care providers with some sort of equity?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, there -- let me just clarify what I said before about -- what I just said about the assisted living. There is \$100 million in the VAP Program, so the Vital Assistance Provider Program.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Transitioning to libraries, one of the most exciting topics in this budget proposal. Certainly library is in a better place than it was in the Governor's proposal, but recently on a Statewide tour, members of this Body heard from the library community about how libraries are being asked to be all things for all people and do even more than ever before. When we're taking a budget that's going to, you know, propose \$226 billion, shouldn't we be investing in this community resource that is serving as a community center in all

communities, whether they're rich, poor, urban, suburban, rural.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, we do in -- in our budget include an extra \$10 million increase for library aid, so we bring that total up to \$106.1 million, which is \$12 million over -- over last year, and there's also capital funding for -- for libraries.

MR. JENSEN: It's funny you mentioned the capital funding because I think even the library advocates and the folks who run the libraries say that \$34 million was great last year, we're certainly happier with \$34 than \$14, but when we have construction aid across the State that is much, much higher, a \$34 million top line number severely limits the ability of investment in local -- local libraries, where they can only do smaller upgrades and not make substantial generational improvements that really bring our libraries into the 21st Century.

MS. WEINSTEIN: We are \$20 million -- \$20 million over -- over the Governor.

MR. JENSEN: Well, I think that certainly -- on this we're much better than the Governor, but I think we can be even better, and it's funny --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Some of your colleagues have been complaining I'm spending too much money, so I'm just --

MR. JENSEN: It's a strange, you know -- maybe I'll come stand on that side of the aisle for this part of the conversation.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Welcome. We have some empty chairs.

(Laughter)

MR. JENSEN: So included in the budget was digital inclusion, and I think this kind of builds on the idea of capital aid and is there any -- within the budget proposal and maybe this has to wait until the final enacted budget, but is there any mechanism for how we're going to implement or make the decisions on who gets this digital inclusion funding?

MS. WEINSTEIN: The final decisions will be made by SED, and there's not restrictions on where it goes. It's where it's needed so it could be urban, rural, suburban.

MR. JENSEN: So there's no parity between New York City and Upstate in that funding allocation?

MS. WEINSTEIN: No.

MR. JENSEN: Well, I think it may be worthwhile in the final enacted budget to make sure we ensure parity. Is there any upper limit on grant dollar amounts? Or is it just you put in the proposal, you can get a grant for X-amount of dollars?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I would think that that would be up to SED to make sure that there's balance certainly around the State.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. And then my last area of questions on adult literacy, and I -- and I appreciate the Majority increasing that dollar amount; I won't tell my colleagues that I said that. Was there any desire when adding that additional funding to loosen the restrictions on how that (inaudible) funding can be used, because right now it's very restrictive?

MS. WEINSTEIN: There is some -- some loosening of restrictions.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Because certainly I think when you look at Upstate versus Downstate, Upstate relies more on volunteer organizations; New York City relies on paid teacher models. And having more flexibility in how they can allocate and use these funds I think would be very important, especially as we're having these diverse -- or digital inclusion dollars that'll be available to help increase digital literacy, certainly new Americans we're expected, I know the Governor announced that we're going to be accepting Ukrainian refugees and as we try to welcome these new Americans into our State and into our society, allowing literacy groups to have more ability to use this funding would be -- would be critically important.

MS. WEINSTEIN: All right. I would agree with that.

MR. JENSEN: Perfect. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, I appreciate your time.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: Mr. Ashby.

MR. ASHBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Chairwoman yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. ASHBY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: She will yield.

MR. ASHBY: My questions are going to revolve around veteran services --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. ASHBY: -- and veterans. So in this proposed budget, it includes \$110 million for the continuation of the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative. Do we know how many units will go to veterans this year?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I could tell you the dollar amount, but not the -- \$5 million is carved out for veterans.

MR. ASHBY: Is that -- is that an increase from previous years?

MS. WEINSTEIN: No. I believe -- I believe it's the same number.

MR. ASHBY: Okay. This budget also plans to spend \$10 million on veterans' service organizations for capital projects.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. ASHBY: Do we have any idea how many of these organizations or facilities are in need of repair?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We don't know but, you know, certainly hearing from a number of colleagues and I have some -- I have a VFW -- several VFW Posts either in my district or just outside, I know that this has been something that we're hearing from people around the State will be very welcome.

MR. ASHBY: Do we think -- do we think that \$10

million is adequate for this?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We -- it's the first time that we're providing this type of funding so we will -- we will see whether it is and if not, it's something we can address in next year's budget.

MR. ASHBY: Okay. I appreciate that. The Veterans' Benefit Advising Program was cut by \$3.2 million in the Executive Budget, and that eliminated 20 programs that support our veterans, and it wasn't included in this budget either. And it includes services for legal programs, job training, community support programs; why -- why was that not included?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I think when we're talking about our, what we -- we and the Senate would term *legislative adds* and that would be something that you will see in the -- in the final budget.

MR. ASHBY: That's great news, that's great news. And I would also imagine that, you know, what was included in this -- in this budget is elevating the Division of Veterans' Services to a Department, our colleague carries that bill and I know many of us in this Chamber are in full support of that, and I would think that in future years, these concerns could be answered by elevating the Division. But this year as it stands right now, a lot of these concerns are going unanswered. So I would hope, as you said when this gets ironed out, that these services are -- are included in that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEINSTEIN: I promise, I'm sure they will be.

MR. ASHBY: You promise?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Without an absolute promise, I'm sure that the programs that we funded in the past for veterans' services will be continued.

MR. ASHBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Madam Chairwoman yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: Will the Chair yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: The Chair yields.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some pointed questions I wanted to ask, portions of the one-House, particularly the Opioid Settlement Funds. Last year we passed legislation creating an Opioid Settlement Fund and Settlement Board to ensure the funds were distributed appropriately. Do you know if the Settlement Board has met yet?

MS. WEINSTEIN: They have not yet met.

MR. BROWN: Okay. And -- so is there anything in this proposal that will specify how these funds are to be used and how they're going to be allocated by the Board?

MS. WEINSTEIN: As I said, the Board has not met. There is \$60 million for opioid MAT treatment and \$6 million for the Overdose Prevention Program.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MS. WEINSTEIN: And there's also \$8 million for

the MATTERS Program, and there's a few other smaller line-outs.

MR. BROWN: Thank you for that. Switching gears, there's a section on electric vehicles sales tax incentives and exemption for electric vehicle purchasers from up to \$35,000. With respect to that, is there any basis for that in terms of any data as far as electric vehicle sales?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We -- we don't have data going backward. The idea is to try and encourage the use of electric vehicles in -- in our State.

MR. BROWN: Which I understand, but my understanding is that sales have picked up incredibly for electric vehicles in the State, so I'm just wondering if there's any basis for this portion of the one-House?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We want to encourage further purchase of electric vehicles.

MR. BROWN: So if I may, if that money could be put towards electric vehicle charging stations, I think that money would be a lot better spent.

MS. WEINSTEIN: There are -- there are Federal dollars that we will be having for -- that we will be getting for EV charging stations and...

MR. BROWN: Yes, I actually participated in one of those hearings recently and the reports coming out of NYPA and the Comptroller's report showed that for the past nine years, the number of EV charging stations has an abysmal record, only something like

200 charging stations have been built in nine years where money was allocated. So that's why I'm saying if we can put in the structure.

MS. WEINSTEIN: We do have \$15 million in the budget through NYSERDA for additional charging stations, and I know at our hearings the Thruway Authority did testify that, if you noticed, there's a lot of, I guess, restoration or a total rebuild of a number of the service areas and they are planning EV charging stations there.

MR. BROWN: I'm very glad to hear that, thank you. Switching gears, there's a provision entitled Suffolk County Water Quality and that in the one-House we're rejecting establishment of wastewater management district to fund water quality. That doesn't cost the State any money; am I correct in that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Since it's not really a budget issue, but a policy issue, as I mentioned to Assemblywoman Walsh that low policy issues are being removed from the budget and we will continue to have that discussion off-budget.

MR. BROWN: I would appreciate that, because this is something that Suffolk County residents are asking for, to help our water quality on both shores of the Island, so thank you.

Next is the Office of Cannabis Management, there's a provision there to employ 208 full-time employees. Do we have a breakdown of what those employees are for?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We don't have that breakdown.

MR. BROWN: If I could ask, if you have that

information, if you can provide it to my colleagues, we'd appreciate that.

MS. WEINSTEIN: We will -- we will get that -- get that information in I'm sure by the time we have a final budget in place. When we have these discussions, we'll be able to have that information here.

MR. BROWN: Thank you for that. And the last question I had for you with respect to the alcohol beverage to-go program that was made permanent, I'm incredibly grateful that that was removed. Can I just ask for the basis of that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We reject that the Governor's provision from the budget because that's, again, a policy issue that we can discuss off-budget.

MR. BROWN: And I thank you thoroughly for that.
So on the resolution, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER CUSICK: On the resolution.

MR. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, since taking office in November of 2019, the State Budget has increased over 21 percent. That's in two years the State Budget has increased 21 percent, which is a startling number. In 2021, it increased 20 percent and this last -- this proposed budget is 6 percent. So from \$176 billion two years ago to \$212 billion, to a proposed whopping \$226 billion in this one-House bill, some \$8 billion more than the Executive Budget.

So I sit here and I ask myself, you know, we require school districts to adhere to a 2 percent property tax cap; yet, the New

York State Legislature spends money like drunken sailors on leave. We negligently removed \$2 billion in reserves with respect to COVID relief. So what happens when the Federal government turns off the tap and stops providing aid to New York State? What happens when and if revenue is worse than predictions? And what happens when there's not enough money to balance our books? Are we going to turn to the people of the State and raise taxes when they're already struggling with inflation, struggling with recovery from COVID? I think the time has come for a spending cap for New York State to get its fiscal house in order, in order to protect the taxpayers of this State. And for this reason and other reasons, I'm voting no. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you.

Mr. Byrne.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Chairperson yield for some questions?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The sponsor yields.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know our colleagues have already reviewed with you the overall cost of this budget succeeding over \$226 billion, increased debt over \$69 billion, \$150 million more than the Governor had initially proposed in her Executive Budget. The previous speaker asked a question about the electric sales tax exemption and I think this was mentioned earlier, I just wanted to ask, has there been any discussion within the Assembly Majority and the context of the Budget of suspending the State sales

tax on gasoline?

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, certainly that's a topic that has been in the news. In looking, and I think actually going back to the initial conversations, I had questions and answers with Mr. Ra, we looked at how we could best use the available resources to help families that are to pay for the essentials of life, and we determined that the proposals that we have to help the -- the property tax cut, the increase in salaries, the increase in the child tax credit, that these are -- and others that I mentioned, are a better way to immediately assist families struggling with --

MR. BYRNE: Respectfully --

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- versus the -- the gas tax, so...

MR. BYRNE: Understood, and respectfully I would just suggest -- I would submit that sales tax exemption on electric vehicles up to \$35,000 is not necessarily catering to those who are from low incomes or middle-class families. I think eliminating or suspending the sales tax which is inherently regressive and disproportionately hurts low-income and middle-class families might have a more immediate impact by leaving income and money in the pockets of New Yorkers. But I know -- I ask because my understanding is some of our colleagues in the other Chamber are discussing this, colleagues in the Assembly Minority Conference have been proposing this, it's been obviously talked about because as State legislators, we don't have the power to influence OPEC or a lot of these geopolitical issues, but we can make a substantive change by

putting money in the pockets of New Yorkers, making it a little bit more affordable for them to commute to go to work and to provide for their families. Thank you for answering that question, I do have more questions, Madam Chair, go ahead, yeah, if you could --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Just in terms of the EV charging, because it may have been asked before, it's estimated to be just \$20 million. Obviously, you know, the gas tax is approaching \$2 billion and, you know, again as I said, we use these other measures that I had left out, the \$500 million for utility arrears, which is a direct help to consumers and residents of our State.

MR. BYRNE: Understood, and the gas sales tax obviously brings in a tremendous amount of revenue to the State, too, so my understanding of that, but I think it should be on the table for a discussion. Another question that I have and I'm not sure if you're aware of this, I'll ask that first, are you aware that some of our SUNY and CUNY students in New York were disenrolled during the fall of last year because they were unable to comply with the vaccine mandate?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I -- I would assume there were some people. There was a requirement throughout the system they be vaccinated. To the extent they didn't meet that requirement I would assume they would be disenrolled, if they didn't have a --

MR. BYRNE: So I bring that up because it's been an issue with some of the residents in my district, and I know it's Statewide, and this might be a little bit unique by campus by campus

but on August 23rd, SUNY made an announcement that all SUNY students be vaccinated to remain enrolled. Many students were given a 35 day grace period from the time of the announcement to get vaccinated. Only some were able to comply to get an actual -- to get an exemption and some correspondence that we have from a representative at SUNY, there was 8,134 exemption requests for last fall, over 7,000 were religious, 1,086 were medical. That's just about 75 percent of those were approved. Close to 1,500 students were disenrolled for various reasons, including vaccine status. It did not give them nearly enough time to comply. A lot of us, myself included, actually introduced a bill to do this, think it's only fair, it's not about an argument or debate about vaccines, but these students should be reimbursed the tuition cost for the fall of last year. And I would ask that that be considered to be included in the State Budget.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you know, the decision to be vaccinated -- requirement for vaccination was the CUNY Chancellor's requirement.

MR. BYRNE: I understand that, and if that's the case and these students paid tuition, they should be able to get their money back. That's -- that's my point. In the interest of fairness, we should make sure that students that were disenrolled because they didn't have time to go through that process should have an opportunity to get their money back. Moving on.

MS. WEINSTEIN: We'll certainly look into what the policy was.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you. And you can cosponsor my bill when I get a bill number, if you'd like. I'd be happy to have you on it. Or SUNY and CUNY can just do it on their own and save us a lot of time, which would be great, I would love them to do that, too.

I'll say some good things before -- some other positives that I just want to say to the Majority and this Conference, the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Assistance Program, it seems that it's not only been reinstated and funded, but the language to bring back the program is in this one-House resolution; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. BYRNE: So I want to say thank you because I think it was the 2020 Budget right at the onset of the pandemic, we had the MRT II coming out, a lot of tough budget decisions were being made but I think it was a travesty. It was just gross failure of this Body to agree to a State Budget that removed that program at a time when we were in the midst of a pandemic with a virus that attacks someone's respiratory system that we took away a program that helped people suffering from Cystic Fibrosis. And I want to say, you know, credit where credit is due. Thank you for putting it in your one-House. They say budget is about priorities, it doesn't cost the State a lot of money in the grand scheme of things. I'm glad to see that's in there. I'm also glad that your one-House rejects the Governor's proposal to eliminate prescriber prevails, and a question I had was it eliminates the sales tax diversion from county governments

to support distressed hospitals, but it does keep that funding to support those distressed hospitals elsewhere; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, it -- yes.

MR. BYRNE: Okay. Well I -- I don't necessarily think the county governments and their sales tax should be used to help support those county government budgets so they don't have to rely overly on -- more on property taxes, so that is a good move.

Moving on with some other questions before I run out of time, I'm about halfway there so I'll keep going. As far as Medicaid, it's typically the largest portion of our State Budget. Do you mind just sharing a breakdown in total of Federal, State, and local share of Medicaid this year, what the cost is?

(Pause)

MS. WEINSTEIN: So based on the Governor's -- so Federal money is about \$58 billion, which would be an increase of \$4 billion over the '21-'22 levels. The State expenditure, it's about \$34 billion, which is an increase of about \$7- over -- over the Executive, and the locals numbers don't change, projected at \$8.2 billion, an increase of \$655 million over '21-'22 levels.

MR. BYRNE: Okay. With the provision in the one-House resolution to eliminate the cap on Medicaid, the global cap on Medicaid, is there any other safeguards that the Majority is looking to impose to control the growth of Medicaid spending?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you're asking if we disregarded the cap in prior -- prior years, it just has to fit within our

spending plan.

MR. BYRNE: Okay. Now, over the last -- Medicaid continuing, I mean you said \$34 billion, that's a tremendous amount of money and it's an important program that served a lot of different needs for folks in New York, but it has a way of growing very quickly and there's a lot of folks that I know who would love to see that cap completely eliminated because those are dollars in their pockets, as well, and some of them work very hard, I'm not discounting that, but it can become unsustainable for taxpayers, so that's a concern that some of us have. Over the last several years, the State has been behind on providing Medicaid reconciliation savings to the counties. Does this one-House proposal include Medicare [sic] reimbursement to counties and, if so, how much and is this the total amount due to counties since the Fiscal Year of 2016-2017?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We -- we don't change anything that the Executive proposed in that -- in that area. And you're asking for the change from 2017 until now in that?

MR. BYRNE: Yeah, as far as dollars owed.

MS. WEINSTEIN: I believe that there's money that is being held back by the Executive, but I don't have those numbers.

MR. BYRNE: Then we're not doing anything to combat that, okay. The Essential Plan, I know this one-House there's a -- it seems like it's familiar bill language to a separate bill I think we discussed in the Health Committee to expand eligibility regardless of immigration status and regardless of Federal financial participation.

So my understanding is it does not require -- does it require the State to at least seek participation from the Federal government? The cost I see is \$345 million, but do we know what that would be if the Feds participated?

MS. WEINSTEIN: There's not an intention to seek reimbursement because it's not an allowable expense under the Federal Essential Plan Program.

MR. BYRNE: Okay, understood. So that would mean then that we're completely relying on the State. Is there any concern that by putting this type of policy in place that it would encourage more illegal immigration in the State of New York, ballooning the cost of the essential plan to the State of New York?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I don't think so. I think this will actually -- this plan will reduce costs in the State because there are people that are using -- this will hopefully encourage, by having insurance, encourage people to use community-based services instead of emergency room services as their primary doctors so we think it will actually result in a reduction in medical costs to the State.

MR. BYRNE: Oh, I think there's concerns that putting a policy in place that could attract more folks where the State puts out expenses it could just continue to grow, but I think we'll just agree to disagree on that. As far as pandemic costs, I know there is the funding here. Does the proposed budget include any funding to examine the State's pandemic response over the last two years, including any sort of investigation into how the State responded to the

pandemic in our nursing homes?

MS. WEINSTEIN: No.

MR. BYRNE: I didn't think so. I just know a lot of it has been asked before, so I just wanted to make sure it was on the record. Let me see... I'll go on the bill, how about that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the bill, Mr. Byrne.

MR. BYRNE: I think I have a little bit less than two minutes left. I want to thank the Speaker and my colleagues and the Chair for indulging me with answering those questions. There are always good and bad in every bill. I think this bill -- this budget has grown to an extremely large amount. We seem to be competing with California in all the wrong ways. We're looking at a \$226 billion budget increase, I think I first came here, it's my third term, in my first term, the first budget was close to \$157 million [sic] and I think it's kind of crazy to think that we're already at \$226 billion in just five to six years.

Obviously there's a lot of needs for folks in New York. One of the things that we can do immediately is provide relief to the folks at home by letting them keep more money in their pockets to begin with. That's why we asked about the fuel tax. You know, sales tax, consumption based taxation I think is highly preferable to income taxes which are punitive to people who work, or even property

taxes to an extent. But consumption based taxation is extremely regressive. So if we're going to try to provide relief to people that are suffering from inflation or high energy costs because of geopolitical issues, because of national issues, because we're no longer an energy independent nation, or because people who previously held the Executive position made ridiculous decisions like shutting down Indian Point. I think we can provide meaningful relief, I don't believe this one-House resolution does that so I will be voting no and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Palmesano.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Chairwoman yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, certainly.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein yields, sir.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you very much. A few questions for you. First of all, the MTA Capital Plan -- or the MTA operating aid, the budget calls for direct State support for \$3.8 billion, an \$800 million increase over last year; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Hold on one moment, let me pull up...

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, State support for the MTA operating, \$3.8 billion, \$800 more than last year -- \$800 million more

than last year.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Great, thank you. Now for the CHIPS Program, the PAVE-NY Program and the Extreme Winter Recovery, kind of the signature formula driven programs for our local municipalities. Those remain flat at \$538- for CHIPS, \$150- for PAVE and \$100 million for Winter Recovery for a total of \$788 million; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We have been -- we've had some increases in some -- in some of these roads programs.

MR. PALMESANO: Yeah, and I'll get to the pothole program and the State touring roads in a minute, but those three specific signature programs, PAVE, Bridge, and Winter Recovery all remain flat for a total of \$788 million, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We have very large increase in the two years in local capital aid funding.

MR. PALMESANO: I'm just talking about this year's programs. So the increase in the MTA direct support aid to the MTA operating budget, \$800 million, is more than the three signature programs for this year's funding for CHIPS, PAVE-NY and Extreme Winter Recovery, correct, for this year?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Right, so the roads money is from the General Fund, the MTA money is the dedicated fund tax revenues, so that -- it's two different pots of -- of money.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. The Governor has

proposed a \$100 million pothole program. How is that funding going to be distributed? Is it going to go through a formula driven program like CHIPS or Winter Recovery? How are you establishing that program to work?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I believe that that's still undetermined.

MR. PALMESANO: So that's not determined yet. Now, I saw that you added \$100 million for the State touring roads program. That benefits about 120-plus municipalities around the State, correct? Cities manly and other towns, about 120 municipalities.

MS. WEINSTEIN: There really are quite a few municipalities that have State roads that run through them that they previously have been required to repair, so this is based -- so we added the \$100 million as a total of \$200 million and it's based on our per mile of State roads within -- the distribution of that money will be based on --

MR. PALMESANO: Right, but it's about a rough estimate of about 120, give or take, municipalities compared to the 1,500 municipalities that get assistance through programs like CHIPS and Winter Recovery.

MS. WEINSTEIN: I don't have the exact number in front of me, but part of the DOT, part of our -- the first year of a five-year plan, in terms of roads of when we skip the transit, but we add \$136 million to the Capital Plan for road and bridges, to maintain

this funding at historic -- historically high levels, that's an increase of 4.7.

MR. PALMESANO: Yeah, and I understand that, Madam Chair. With the State touring roads, that money has to go for those specific roads, it doesn't go to the municipality to decide how to spend those dollars like they do with the CHIPS program, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Any municipality that has the State road passing through it qualifies for funding.

MR. PALMESANO: Right, and it has to be used on those specific roads that qualify, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes, but then obviously because they have the responsibility to repair those roads --

MR. PALMESANO: Sure.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- it then frees up equivalent number of dollars for other uses.

MR. PALMESANO: If they're one of the 120-plus municipalities that benefit from this funding. Okay, I'd like to talk about the provision in your budget about the Ida flooding -- flooding from Ida victims, the \$50 million. I know back in September after the Ida flooding happened, I know it was a tragic, this tropical flood that happened. This is -- so this is just specific for Ida, just specific for New York City, correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Anywhere where there was flooding as a result of -- it's not just Ida, any kind of natural disaster.

MR. PALMESANO: So you're saying this flooding

-- this \$50 million in this -- in this budget presentation you're submitting to us today, would it be eligible for Tropical Storm Fred that happened a couple weeks before Ida --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: -- in Upstate New York that was devastating, they would be eligible for some of this funding as well?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay, so it's not just for Ida, because that's not the way we under --

MS. WEINSTEIN: No, and even going back to Sandy if they are unreimbursed, if there are expenses that were incurred by FEMA, that \$50 million could be requested for that support, also.

MR. PALMESANO: So this would be for any region that was devastated by storms, they would be eligible and it would be reimbursable for costs so if they already replaced a boiler or a hot water tank, they would be eligible for reimbursement of these costs?

MS. WEINSTEIN: After FEMA, after insurance, yes.

MR. PALMESANO: Okay. I want to talk about some of the green -- green energy programs, specifically I know there's been a lot of talk about the electric vehicle charging stations infrastructure. Obviously from your perspective and from the Majority's perspective, is New York State ready to -- and able to

support the really significant, gigantic increases in the electrical demand for this EV charging infrastructure that's going to be placed upon it? I know that NYISO had indicated just for electric vehicles it would require an additional 4.2 million megawatts of additional energy use on a yearly basis, and they estimated that it would be enough to power 58 -- 580,000 homes. Someone referred to it as 1.3 billion homes for one hour. So do you feel you have the energy infrastructure in place?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I think so, and, you know, from the hearings we've requested NYSERDA to prepare a plan about how we would address the issues of the increase in EV charging stations.

MR. PALMESANO: Do you have any idea, any estimates from your side how much it's going to cost to put this infrastructure in place to meet this demand?

MS. WEINSTEIN: The PSC is going along with NYSERDA, and they're going to have plans and we'll -- when we see those plans, then we'll have a better idea of the kind of costs that are involved.

MR. PALMESANO: Fair enough. The environmental and human labor uses associated with nickel, lithium, cobalt and rare mining, all which is driven by the need for these materials for electric vehicles and batteries is well documented, including the school buses and other buses. How does the Majority and you guys address the situation that -- the problems that are going on with these issues, the child labor like, for example, in the

Democratic Republic of Congo is responsible for 70 percent of the cobalt that is extracted, made and used in these batteries that are being placed in our electric vehicles, our electric school buses. How do you reconcile that, with the human relations, human impact, societal impact and environmental impact, especially with lithium as well with the water that's used?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I don't think what -- we don't in this budget, but I don't think what you are saying relates just to the -- to the EV.

MR. PALMESANO: No, I'm not -- I mean, it's anything with batteries. I mean, but specifically the amount of cobalt, 70 percent of the cobalt that is used in electric vehicles and in batteries is being mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is well documented that there's some 40,000 child labor workers on this, some as young as six years old. How do we reconcile that in dealing with the fact that there's child labor, and isn't it kind of ironic that we're talking about electric vehicles for our school buses that are kids are going to be riding on and underneath them are going to be batteries that were put together by child labor out of the Democratic Republic of Congo, isn't that kind of ironic and disturbing when we think about that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I guess I would just say that the more EV charging stations we have, the smaller the batteries can be and less demand for cobalt there would be.

MR. PALMESANO: Well, even lithium is another

area. I mean, we've seen the amount of intensity, that water intensity, we always hear it when we talk about other types of energy extraction with the amount of water is used, the amount of energy -- water that's being used with lithium is being resurfaced and going and poisoning water and some of these third world countries and the fact that China has a total control over the rare Earth materials market, about 89 percent. How do we reconcile that, that we're going to be totally dependent on China for our energy policy as we want to try to get off of fossil fuels and natural gas and go towards solar panels and wind and batteries.

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, it's any battery. We don't address the international issues in this budget.

MR. PALMESANO: Well, I know, but it's ironic whenever we talk about, whenever I bring up the issue of why are we -- why are we advancing this CLCPA when New York only contributes .5 percent of the total carbon emissions in the world while China contributes 29 percent and is building coal plants hand over fist, but when we bring that up you say, *Well, New York's going to lead, everyone's going to follow us*, but you want to lead on that, but you don't want to lead on dealing with child labor issues with the cobalt that's being done in the Democratic Republic of Congo, kids have died, kids have been maimed in these kind of plants. How come when we bring that up to you guys, we bring it up to the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, no one wants to address it, they just want to say it's someone else's issue, it's the Federal government's

issue and it's not our issue. And I just don't see how you can say you want to lead on one but not lead on the other. But that was more of a statement, I guess, than a question, I apologize.

On the cost side of it, is there anything relative to these policies implementing on the cost implication that is going to come upon citizens from the implementation of the CLCPA and some of these policies that would kind of offset some of this? Is there any way that -- any language that would say if we had significant cost increases, would we take a pause on some of these policies? Any language in your budget bill saying if there's significant cost increases on some of these policies, as far as affordability, we can stop and pause?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So I mean obviously there's -- we don't have things in this budget, but the Climate Action Policy Council is coming up with specific proposals that we'll be able to address as we go forward.

MR. PALMESANO: All right. And I see that there's \$500 million to help with utility arrears from State taxpayers. It's also my understanding that the PSC has collected -- authorized collection of about \$3.4 billion in any last year through the Clean Energy Fund, and of that \$3.4 billion, some has been allocated, some has been obligated, but there's about \$1.4 billion that's still sitting there in the utility's hands. Wouldn't it be smarter -- I understand green and clean energy is a priority of yours, but wouldn't -- that might be a priority but it's not urgent like these arrears. Wouldn't it be better to use some

of this \$1.4 billion to help settle some of these energy bills, these utility arrears, versus asking for an additional \$500 million from the taxpayers who are already paying high energy bills and are already paying these taxes. Why hit them again? Why not use what's in there already? And we can put off some of those clean energy projects, and I think that's more of a priority, let's use those funds that are there instead of asking \$500 million more from the taxpayers.

MS. WEINSTEIN: I do think that even though that money is there, it's been allocated, but a lot of it --

MR. PALMESANO: Some --

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- has been allocated.

MR. PALMESANO: -- has been allocated, some of it has been obligated, but the rest is just sitting there waiting for it to be done. I'm saying let's use some of that. We should be at least exploring -- explore using that to help with the arrears rather than ask for \$500 million for the taxpayers, but thank you.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, it does have a purpose.

MR. PALMESANO: I understand --

MS. WEINSTEIN: There's an intended purpose and it just hasn't been allocated --

MR. PALMESANO: Right.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- so that's why we think the \$500 --

MR. PALMESANO: Fair enough.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- million helps utilities.

MR. PALMESANO: Thank you. I appreciate your time.

Mr. Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the bill, sir.

MR. PALMESANO: I want to try to touch on these as quick as I can with the little bit of time I have left. This budget proposal spends a lot of money, \$8 billion more than the Governor, \$14 billion more than the budget last year. I'm kind of shocked when we're facing a \$11.4 -- \$11.4 billion budget surplus and \$13.4 billion in Federal infrastructure aid, and there's not a single increase in the CHIPS program or Winter Recovery. Even the Senate down the hall has put \$250 million increase for CHIPS and \$50 million for Winter Recovery but, yet, in the same budget we have \$800 million increase for the MTA operating aid to the total of \$3.8 billion. That's more than CHIPS, Winter Recovery and PAVE-NY total. And this pothole program that's not allocated, that needs to go through the CHIPS formula. All communities have potholes, we need to address that issue and balance it off. The State touring roads, there's about 120 communities are going to be impacted, CHIPS affects all 1,500 municipalities in our State. They should all benefit from that.

I won't get into the flooding issue, we talked about that, but the CLCPA is a runaway freight train heading towards the taxpayers of this State and they have no idea. When New York only contributes .5 percent of the total carbon emissions in the world and China's at 29 percent, there's no talk about cost or affordability. No

talk about reliability, only clean and green but, yet, when we talk about the child abuse labor issues that are going on with the extraction of this rare Earth material, that is a problem that we need to address that is not being addressed by this side of this Administration because the green is not green as you think it is.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Manktelow.

MR. MANKTELOW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the sponsor yield for just a couple questions, please?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. MANKTELOW: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question on the Environmental Bond Act. In the one-House Budget, it looks like we're going to go from the possibility of \$4 billion to \$5 billion; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. MANKTELOW: And what will this Act do?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Let me get the list of items. It's not that are -- would be eligible, but it's not broken down since the Bond Act first has to pass.

(Pause)

So the categories are restoration and flood risk reduction projects, open span -- space land conversation recreational projects, climate change mitigation projects, water quality improvement projects and general purposes of the clean water, clean

air and green jobs environmental would be included.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay, thank you. Back to the clean air part of it. How do you envision the Clean Air Act, I guess, Bond Act, how do you foresee that moving forward? How will that work?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Hold on a moment, please.

(Pause)

So the -- well, the additional billing that we add would be -- if you want just to know the clean air, it would be \$300 million to combat air pollution in the environmental justice communities, we talked about that before. The funding to combat water pollution, to combat urban heat island effect for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at State-owned buildings. And I think I mentioned earlier about including land for acquisition and water protection.

MR. MANKTELOW: All right. On the air pollution, Madam Chair, how much of the air pollution comes from outside of New York State?

MS. WEINSTEIN: I have no idea.

MR. MANKTELOW: How about the water pollution? How much of that comes into New York through the Great Lakes, through the canal system?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We don't really know, you know, where the origin of some of the water pollution is so that's why we have funding to combat water pollution.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay. So is it okay to say or is it right to assume that today at this time we do not know how much of the pollution is coming from outside of New York State?

MS. WEINSTEIN: The air pollution, you know, I think is mostly combustible within New York State.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay. So I know in New York State -- I know in New York State, you know, we have some of the most stringent air cleaning policies, you know, overseen by DEC, of course, and then of course we have the EPA on the Federal side. So I guess my question is we're going to spend \$4- to \$5 billion possibly on taxpayer's money to look at clean air and clean water, we do not know how the air and the water is getting contaminated this time. I'm sure a lot of it's coming from outside of New York. Would this not be more of a Federal issue and should this not be addressed from the Federal side instead of putting this cost on the taxpayers of New York State?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We're looking at pollution within our State as our contribution to eliminating pollution within New York State. There are Federal dollars also that address some of the pollution issues.

MR. MANKTELOW: Well, if we're looking at it from the New York State side.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes, we're doing New York State projects.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay. Well, if we clean up

New York and the air is still coming in from outside of New York State and, again, polluting the same air that we just cleaned, isn't this like throwing money into a bucket with no bottom?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you know, we can only do what we can do. So we can control pollution within New York State. To the extent that there's pollution in other parts of the country, other parts of the world, we in New York State can't control that.

MR. MANKTELOW: No, no. You're absolutely right, but what we can control is the spending and if what we're doing isn't going to accomplish the mission, then why on Earth would we spend our taxpayers' dollars to do something that isn't going to ultimately clean the air? It -- I'm sorry.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, you know, first of all it's a Bond Act --

MR. MANKTELOW: I understand.

MS. WEINSTEIN: -- so our constituents, the residents of New York State will have an opportunity to vote on the Bond Act and to see if they want to spend the money and I think -- I don't know if you were here earlier when I mentioned just some of the findings of pollution are, in fact, very local, that there have been studies that show that increased asthma rates occur in -- particularly in children that are living close to highways, that -- in communities where there are fewer trees that the air pollution is worse. That, again, the asthma and other kinds of breathing issues are greater so that certainly points to the fact that there is pollution that's affecting the

health of New Yorkers that's very localized. So we need to spend the money to help in those -- those communities. There's water pollution, lead in -- replacement of lead pipes that have leached into communities, into homes. So you know, there are a lot of local issues. Whatever may exist throughout the rest of the country and the world, we can't address, but we certainly have enough local issues that can address and make a difference in people's lives.

MR. MANKTELOW: Yeah, you're absolutely right, and especially with the situation with the lead solder on our water pipes throughout all the -- a lot of homes and buildings in New York State. I believe that's probably the number one lead contributing issue to water. So I appreciate your time on that one.

Back to the tax cap. Do you know that most of our -- all of our local municipalities, we have to deal with the 2 percent tax cap, and I know our schools have to address that, as well, but they have to go out to the voters to approve anything, to override that tax cap. The 2 percent tax cap really isn't 2 percent. I was a town supervisor for nine years and if you do the numbers and the math, it's never 2 percent because there's so many things that you have to take into that equation. Where here, in New York State, I'm just looking at this again to make sure I'm right, the 30 day Executive Budget versus the Assembly one-House spending plan, All Funds on average is 3.62 percent increase. The State Operating Funds is 5.1 percent. And then I looked at the enacted budget from 2021 versus 2022-'23, All-Funds are at 6.32 percent, the State Operating Funds will be at 10.28 percent.

How is it that we as legislators that can enact a 2 percent tax cap not abide by those same rules? How can we do that?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, that 2 percent cap for the school districts is -- was enacted a number of years ago and, as you said, it's just a number. There can be a vote to go over that number. Part of what fuels the increase in our spending has to do with some of the Federal dollars that we have received, the pandemic relief funds that we've received. So that is -- and, you know, and then despite that we have a year to year, we are having an increase in revenues so we have the funds and we want to make sure that we can provide the necessary help for New Yorkers.

MR. MANKTELOW: So because we received more funding from revenue and because we have received more Federal dollars, we have to spend that money.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Right. And, you know, we're giving -- we're spending this money, but we're not -- we're -- the way we're spending money, we're giving relief to utility customers, we're giving relief to taxpayers around the State, we're applying a child care -- you know, I want to go through all of the -- some of those dollars.

MR. MANKTELOW: Does every utility customer get a rebate or relief?

MS. WEINSTEIN: The PSC -- there's \$500 million that we're dedicating for the utility relief. The PSC will come up with a plan, I think you know that there's currently the HEAP plan that many customers are able to avail themselves of. There's been Federal

increases in dollars for the HEAP program under COVID relief. So we're asking the PSC to come up with a plan how we allocate the -- how they would allocate the \$500 million.

MR. MANKTELOW: So they're basically going to come up with a plan on how we, as legislators in New York State, are going distribute that money; is that right?

MS. WEINSTEIN: They're going to -- not how we're going to distribute the money, the PSC will have a plan that utility customers who are in arrears will be able to apply for.

MR. MANKTELOW: So only customers that are in the arrears will get some kind of help, versus a senior citizen that's on a fixed income, that individual or that family will not get any help; is that right?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Just like -- it's to address the arrears. Just like the HEAP program, you have to have arrears in order to qualify. There also was Federal COVID relief funds that helped with utility arrears, so it's -- they're looking for arrears and person described as an elderly person on a fixed income, they may already qualify for an existing State or Federal relief program.

MR. MANKTELOW: So some of our building owners, business owners and landlords, will they receive any of that funding?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's -- it's not intended. It's for residential -- intended for residential customers.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay. Another thing I see in

the one-House Budget is the Beginning Farmers New York Fund. It's funded at \$5 million. Do you know how that will be distributed or how that will be prioritized?

MS. WEINSTEIN: That would be a grant program.

MR. MANKTELOW: And there's talk about it being prioritized; how does that -- how does that happen?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So we do include Article VII language to include priority for applicants who are economically or socially disadvantaged farmers, including but not limited to Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses, veteran-owned businesses, service disabled veteran-owned businesses and immigrant farmers.

MR. MANKTELOW: So but the criteria is you have to be a beginning farmer; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. MANKTELOW: And what -- who determines what a beginning farmer is?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Less than ten years.

MR. MANKTELOW: Less than ten years?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. MANKTELOW: Ahh, I wish this was around like 20 years ago.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Twenty years ago we didn't have this funding.

MR. MANKTELOW: Okay. I know I only have like 37 seconds, so I won't go in on the next question. I'll explain my vote.

So thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. MANKTELOW: And, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time and I'll -- can I get my other 15 minutes?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Can you -- someone has already gotten it. Mr. Ra preceded you on the 15 minute inclusion.

MR. MANKTELOW: It's all right. I'll explain my vote then. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goodell.

MR. GOODELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would the sponsor yield?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Weinstein, will you yield?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. Yes.

MR. GOODELL: Thank you, Ms. Weinstein. And again, thank you for dealing with all these questions. It's quite a remarkable accomplishment. I want to take a quick look at a couple of the tax credits. I see that we have new Empire State Digital Gaming Media Production Credit, that's a \$20 million tax credit for people that produce video games? Is that what that's for?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. GOODELL: And as one of my colleagues mentioned, we have a Farmer's Enhanced Tax Credit that would be an investment tax credit for farm workforce retention, farm work

employer overtime tax credit and that's --

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. No overtime credit is advanceable.

MR. GOODELL: Mm-hmm. And that says \$16 million for this budget year?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. GOODELL: On the Earned Income Tax Credit I see that's a major tax credit, and I see -- although I appreciate the fact that we're now looking at paying that somewhat in advance because obviously if you're poor and you're struggling to make ends meet it's tough to wait for a year to get the investment income -- the Earned Income Tax Credit. In order to have an Earned Income Tax Credit do you have to have a Social Security number?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Either the Social Security number or, the, you know, the ITN number. We make those individual -- we allow those individuals to be eligible.

MR. GOODELL: I see. Okay --

MS. WEINSTEIN: And again, still, as -- as you say they have to still earn it and come in and file their tax return in order to receive the credit. It's -- it's not advanceable in that way.

MR. GOODELL: All right. I see that the Environmental Bond Act language as well as the Infrastructure Improvement Act and the Downtown Revitalization Fund all require a PLA, a project labor agreement; is that correct?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Yes. Yes.

MR. GOODELL: So, in my county we have a couple of great union contractors, particularly in our electrical business. But we don't any general contractors, large general contractors or unions. So does this then preclude any of my local general contractors from participating in these programs?

MS. WEINSTEIN: They -- they can participate if they sign the project labor agreement.

MR. GOODELL: So the only way a non-union contractor could participate is if they sign a union contract?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, just in the -- the labor agreement for that project.

MR. GOODELL: I see. Now of course this requires all -- all electric buses to be zero emission within two years. Is there any appropriation in this budget for that process, that conversion?

MS. WEINSTEIN: It -- I think as I mentioned earlier, you know, since that it's a reimbursable transportation expense, so it's -- in that sense whatever it costs there's a dollar allocation for whatever it costs to -- to do that. That's a reimbursable expense under the education formula.

MR. GOODELL: Is there any exception from the requirement to have electric buses based on the source of the electric power? And the reason I ask that is most of my county and much of the Southern Tier is powered by a large coal plant in Homer City, Pennsylvania. And I'm hesitant to double or triple the cost of a school bus so that they're powered by coal. Is there an exclusion based on the

source of the power?

MS. WEINSTEIN: There -- there's no exclusion that we have within the -- our proposal.

MR. GOODELL: So we can triple the cost of school buses and then watch them being powered by coal, huh? I guess. You don't need to answer that, it's a rhetorical question. Sorry.

MS. WEINSTEIN: It's -- it's not a --

MR. GOODELL: Now I see we have three other --

MS. WEINSTEIN: It won't be a tripling of -- we don't believe it will be a -- a tripling of the cost because that's one -- as I -- I mentioned earlier, that's one of the exclusions -- the Commissioner can exclude the requirement base -- based upon the -- the cost if it's too expensive or the technology doesn't exist.

MR. GOODELL: Just so you're aware, I mean, this is a major issue in my county because our number one employer is Cummins Engine Company, and they've made tremendous strides to have dramatically reduced -- a dramatic reduction in emissions. They're also moving to dual-fuel diesels. And so here we have an irony where we have legislation that dramatically increases the cost of school buses and makes it illegal for them to use low-emission diesel engines that are produced locally, and instead requires them to use coal power that's generated upwind in Pennsylvania. Hey, it's just one of those quirky things.

MS. WEINSTEIN: You know, it's -- the debt -- we're talking about 2035. And who knows if that -- it could be delayed, and

who knows if the coal production will still be happening in Pennsylvania or if there's been -- there'll be some other type of generation for electricity.

MR. GOODELL: Now, the Essential Plan has an increase of \$345 million, but it also has language that says the Essential Plan will be available regardless of immigration status.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Correct.

MR. GOODELL: But the amount that's paid into the Essential Plan is based on income. How are we to verify the income of those who are working here illegally?

MS. WEINSTEIN: We -- right -- right now, as -- as I had mentioned earlier, anybody can get emergency Medicaid care. We think that by having insurance it will encourage individuals to have the -- be able to go to a local community-based care which would be much less expensive than the emergency --

MR. GOODELL: I understand that. But the Essential Care Plan, which is through the health exchange, has different premiums based on your income, right? And it's 100 percent funded if you're below a certain level and then there's a scale where it increases. So my question is, how do we determine what the charge is if we're dealing with people who are not filing income tax returns? How do we verify the income? Is there any language in this that address that issue?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So it's -- it's 250 percent of the poverty level and people would -- would certify that that's their -- their

income.

MR. GOODELL: So it's going to be on the honor system, then, as -- as it relates to how much you pay? An honor system for people who are illegally not paying income taxes because they don't have a Social Security number. It's just ironic that we rely on an honor system for those that we know are violating the law.

But moving on a little bit. Childcare includes the \$770 million. Do we have any criteria -- will this \$770 million, is it a certain percentage of income? Is there income thresholds?

MS. WEINSTEIN: The -- the childcare, we -- we go to 400 percent of the Federal poverty level.

MR. GOODELL: And what percent of the childcare cost would be reimbursed?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Right. We -- we go from -- we go from the current 69 percent to 90 percent.

MR. GOODELL: Okay. So --

MS. WEINSTEIN: To be reimbursed.

MR. GOODELL: If your income is 399 percent of poverty, you get 90 percent of your childcare reimbursed and if it goes up to 401 percent of poverty you get no help? Is that right? So we go from 90 percent reimbursement to zero percent reimbursement based on earning a couple of more dollars?

MS. WEINSTEIN: That is what currently happens and that's why we're raising the threshold that right now is at 200 percent of Federal poverty. If you're at 201 percent you are off of the

-- the subsidy so we're doubling that amount.

MR. GOODELL: Ah. Great news. We moved the fiscal cliff. We still have a fiscal cliff, we make the fiscal cliff even larger but we move it a little bit. By the way, here's just a suggestion. A suggestion is that the percent that you reimburse have a sliding fee downwards as the current program does so that there isn't a fiscal cliff and so that people can afford to make more than 400 percent. That's a suggestion, not a question, really.

I see when it comes to inmates we're going to provide an hour-and-a-half a day on free phone calls at a cost of \$93.3 million. We're providing free tuition like expanding the Tuition Assistance Program. We're eliminating the parole supervision fee which was less than a dollar a day, but we'll eliminate that. Are there other benefits to inmates that are contained in this budget proposal? Did I miss any?

MS. WEINSTEIN: Well, we do have, you know, other programs for people being released from prison. We're trying to have people be rehabilitated and becoming tax -- and become taxpaying citizens of our -- of our State.

MR. GOODELL: And is there additional funding for that in this budget proposal?

MS. WEINSTEIN: So, we do have \$24 million for alternatives to incarceration that would include job placement, supervision, mental health counseling, drug treatment services, which is \$5 million over the Executive. And -- and we do -- we do have -- you mentioned about probation and parole. We do include \$50

million in capital funding for counties for probation, parole and reentry initiatives.

MR. GOODELL: Okay. I was very pleased to see that we're moving the middle-class tax cut, accelerating it, bringing it into this year. Am I correct that that would save our taxpayers \$162 million in this budget year?

MS. WEINSTEIN: In this year, yes.

MR. GOODELL: Okay. Again, thank you so much. You've answered a wide range of questions. I'm always amazed at your ability to handle these questions, and of course you have great staff --

MS. WEINSTEIN: I was going to say, I think you notice I -- I have some people over my shoulder here.

MR. GOODELL: And I have people behind me as well. Thank you so much.

MS. WEINSTEIN: Sure.

MR. GOODELL: On the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: On the bill, sir.

MR. GOODELL: As I mentioned, I was really pleased to see that we have a middle-class tax cut that's being accelerated, and as my colleague noted, that will result in a savings to our middle class of \$162 million. Well, to put that in perspective that's 7/1,000ths of 1 percent of our State budget. Wow! I'm going to write home about that one. So we're increasing the budget by \$13.4 billion, and we're giving a middle-class tax cut of \$162 million.

Those numbers should be reversed. We should be increasing the budget by \$162 million and giving a tax cut of \$13.4 billion. That would really help the New York State economy and our middle class for sure. A budget, of course, is a statement of priorities. It's a statement about what's important to us. And so for our entire agricultural industry we provide a tax credit, as noted by my colleague, of \$16 million. We provide a tax credit of \$20 million for video games. So apparently producing video games is about, you know, 20 percent, 30 percent more important than our entire agricultural industry. We have a \$3.8 billion subsidy for MTA, which, by the way, has not raised its single fare rate since 2015 when they raised it by 25 cents. That's cool. Meanwhile, all my residents are paying \$1.30, \$1.40, \$1.50 a gallon more. Why is it that we're asking all of our residents to subsidize the MTA by \$3.8 billion without asking the riders of the MTA to pay just a little bit more for their own transportation when those Upstate are just being hammered?

Now, I'm glad that we didn't cut CHIPS funding this year. But guess what's happening to the cost of asphaltic oil? That's right, it's going up the same percentage as your gasoline and diesel expenses. Let's ask our New York City friends and colleagues to pay a little bit more on their MTA ride and let's help offset all the Upstaters who are facing these huge cost increases.

Electric buses. Love the concept, right? Double, triple the cost, and in my county that means we convert buses from high-efficiency diesel to coal. To coal power. That's right, because

the electricity in my county, the vast majority of it comes from a coal plant, along with much of Western New York. It makes no financial sense and it makes no environmental sense.

I appreciate that we're increasing the funding from childcare. I urge my colleagues, phase the funding down. We don't need a fiscal cliff which traps people in poverty. We already do that, right? We already know the results. After 40 years of fiscal cliffs, we have more people in poverty because they can't afford to make more money. We don't need to spend tax dollars to trap people in poverty.

Again, I appreciate my colleague's comments, I appreciate her knowledge and information. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The Clerk will record the vote on Assembly Budget Resolution No. 644. This is a Party vote. Any member who wishes to be recorded as an exception to their Conference position is reminded to contact the Majority or Minority Leader at the numbers previously provided.

Mr. Goodell.

MR. GOODELL: Thank you, sir. The Republican Conference is generally opposed to this budget resolution. But those who support it are certainly free to vote in favor of it here on the floor or by calling the Minority Leader's Office and letting us know.

Thank you, sir.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Mr.

Speaker. The Majority Conference is generally going to be in favor of this resolution. However, should colleagues decide to do otherwise please feel free to contact the Majority Leader's Office and we will properly record your vote.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Thank you, Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mrs. Gunther on the resolution.

MS. GUNTHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A friend of mine said that this is sometimes like a dog's breakfast, there's a lot of tasty bits but there are a lot of really nasty -- nasty-tasting bits. And that's exactly what this budget looks like to me. You know, I'm very happy that in this budget there's a line that is very important to me that they're trying to keep the Department of Health in Sullivan County. We are 61 out of 62 as far as health rates. And, you know, I had to fight and yell and scream, and hopefully, you know, our population goes from 76,000 in the wintertime to over 300,000 in the summertime. And I'm glad that they finally got this in the budget because I fought really hard.

Then we go to CHIPS. You know, as a taxpayer in Upstate New York and as I drive through the roads, secondary roads, there are potholes all over the place. There are tons of potholes. And so I think it's really important that we focus on the Upstate and the

needs of Upstate people like myself. We pay very high taxes. Our roads stink. We have not some -- they do, they actually stink. There are potholes -- go up 17, keep going and it's -- it's like I feel like I'm on a roller coaster. So, I -- I still don't know if I'm supporting this -- this Budget Bill or not supporting it. I will -- I think I'll vote yes because my DOH is there. But in the future I think we have to do a better job. Communication is everything. I'd like to be part of the solution and not to find out sometimes at the end what their solutions are. And you know what? I come here every day, I think I've missed 18 days since I took office. It's important for me to be involved and be part of the solutions for the people of New York State. And, you know, I'm going to vote yes because the one part of this budget I've been begging for for the last six months. I've talked to, you know, our Governor, I've talked to everybody about it and how important it is to me. But, you know, I think --

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mrs. --

MRS. GUNTHER: -- that my involvement I -- I think that as --

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mrs. Gunther.

MRS. GUNTHER: Too much?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Too much.

(Laughter)

MRS. GUNTHER: I only speak once in a while, you know.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Wonderful. But too

much. Thank you so much. Mrs. Gunther in the affirmative. Am I right?

MRS. GUNTHER: I'll be in the affirmative.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mrs. Gunther is in the affirmative.

(Laughter)

Ms. Glick.

MS. GLICK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the resolution. I am so excited about where we are on Higher Education funding. After a decade of disinvestment, the people of New York, whether they are students just coming out of high school or returning students, are going to have an opportunity to go to our great public universities that will have the resources to provide for additional full-time faculty, support for mental health services, additional resources for high -- for the various opportunity programs, the support that we are giving to the Capitol for rebuilding older facilities is remarkable. And I am very, very proud to stand on the floor today in support of this resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Glick in the affirmative.

Mr. Abinanti to explain his vote.

MR. ABINANTI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support this proposal by the Assembly. Our proposal not only maintains but actually enhances the tax cuts for middle-class New Yorkers that we've talked about for quite some time. It accelerates the

tax cuts that were planned for future years. At a time when inflation is on the rise, so are the tax cuts for middle-class New Yorkers. And this proposal enhances our investments in meeting the needs that New Yorkers have today and will have in the future. We propose investing more than ever before in education, Higher Education, special education, childcare, people with special needs, cleaning up and preserving our environment, combatting gun violence, paving our potholes, prekindergarten programs and restoring the workforce of the State of New York that is desperately needed to serve the people and support the people of the State of New York.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will vote yes.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mr. Abinanti in the affirmative.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes to explain her vote.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to explain my vote. I want to first begin by commending my -- my colleague, the Chair of Ways and Means, for not just the way she, in a really good manner, explained what this resolution looks like, but because she sat through the process of helping come up with how that should look. And listened to all the people from across the State from all of our districts who have things that they wanted to either have added or have changed or have modified. And I think the proposal that she has come up with is -- is a good one, albeit the fact that it does represent additional dollars, more than the Governor put in and more that we spent last year. But I know

for sure that there are a couple of things that needed to have additional dollars. And, you know, pre-K being one of those. We are at the moment -- we're spending more on pre-K education in the State than we ever have before, and that's a good thing because that is the foundation of children's education and so I'm excited about that. I would also say if I actually conceded or even asked for everything that people from my district asked for, the budget would be even a little higher. So these are not dollars that are frivolous. These are things that people have actually asked for, and particularly our healthcare and our education and our -- our roads, our infrastructure as well as our environment.

So I do want to commend her and I'm very, very pleased to vote in favor of this resolution.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Mrs. Peoples-Stokes in the affirmative.

Ms. Kelles to explain her vote.

MS. KELLES: Thank you, Speaker. I -- thanks for your patience as well. I just wanted to add a little bit of my own thoughts to this budget process. This budget process, as we all know, is a first step in a long negotiation. And I wanted to thank mainly all of the Chairs for all the work they've done, but for the staff as well for the many, many very late nights that they have put into this budget. And the thing that I want to note about it that is important for me is that it is a budget to spend money. Absolutely. But it's about spending money smartly. And I think that this budget does that more

than any document I've seen so far, for me, in this -- my time in the Legislature. This money puts -- this budget puts money into places that will reduce future spending. For example, fair pay for home care. We know that this investment will ultimately lead to fewer people in nursing homes. We know that it will ultimately lead to people who depend on social services less. There have been estimates that show that the net change in the Budget will be a reduction in the Budget. We know that investing in climate change, adaptation and mitigation will ultimately reduce future costs that have been estimated to be about \$30 million a year. I think it's very important that we look at the budget as what it will do over time to the net change in our budget. And these aspects are very important. It invests in workforce development. It invests in our State's school system and community colleges, SUNY and CUNY that we know will improve the education of low- and middle-income individuals in New York State, ultimately leading to a powerful workforce.

These are aspects of this budget that I think ultimately are very prudent and I support this budget and I will be voting in the affirmative.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Ms. Kelles in the affirmative.

Ms. González-Rojas.

MS. GONZÁLEZ-ROJAS: Thank you, sir. I rise today in support of this resolution. I want to thank the Speaker and the really, really hard work of the staff who have been working

tirelessly on this budget. You know, it's important to underscore that a budget is a moral document. And we've shown that this budget is displaying our moral values right here. Coming out of this pandemic it's so critical that we're making investments in education, in healthcare, in food insecurity and in our mental healthcare system. I am so proud to be a champion of coverage for all, and that that has been included in this budget. It is so critical that everyone has access to the healthcare that they need, despite their immigration status. There is historic investments in social workers for schools. There's investments in our smallest businesses, our restaurant industry that has stepped up during this pandemic. And we have made historic investments in SNAP outreach to ensure that no one in our State goes hungry.

So I'm so thrilled to stand in support of this resolution. I hope all our colleagues vote in support of it, and I thank the team for getting -- making sure this happens. So, thank you so much.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Are there any other votes? Announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The resolution is adopted.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

Oh, hold it.

Mr. Goodell, I'm -- I'm sorry, Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

Mr. Goodell has a introduction.

MR. GOODELL: Thank you, sir. It is my great pleasure to introduce Vito Fossella. He is the Borough President of Staten Island, and you may recall he served six terms as Congressman. A proud Staten Islander, and he's here on behalf of Assemblyman Tannousis. If you would extend your greetings and the cordialities of our Chamber, I would appreciate it.

Thank you, sir.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: Certainly. On behalf of Mr. Goodell, the Speaker, the entire Staten Island delegation who you have gathered, we welcome you here to the New York State Assembly, extend to you the privileges of the floor. And ask your help because they're a rambunctious bunch. And I can't get them out of the corner over here. They talk, talk, talk. It's a terrible thing. So but we're so happy to have you here. Thank you. Hope your trip to Albany has been beneficial. Thank you.

(Applause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Mr. Speaker, do you have any further housekeeping or resolutions?

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: We have neither, Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Well, okay.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: How about that?

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Then I move --

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: (Inaudible)

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: -- that the Assembly stands adjourned until 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, March the 15th, tomorrow being a Session day.

ACTING SPEAKER AUBRY: The Assembly stands adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 5:12 p.m., the Assembly stood adjourned until Tuesday, March 15th at 11:00 a.m., that being a Session day.)