



NYSAC
— NEW YORK STATE —
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Legislative Program



2024

KEY COUNTY PRIORITIES



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Table of Contents

- Legislative Staff 2
- Top County Priorities for the
2024 Legislative Session
and SFY 25 Budget 3
- Children with Special Needs..... 4
- Community Colleges
& Higher Education..... 5
- Economic Development
& Agriculture..... 6
- Environment..... 7
- Gaming..... 8
- General Government
& Shared Services 9
- Human Services 10
- Judiciary 11
- Local Finance & Tax Relief 12
- Medicaid..... 13
- Public Employee/Personnel 14
- Public Health 15
- Mental Health..... 16
- Public Infrastructure
& Transportation 17
- Public Safety..... 18
- Veterans 19



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Top County Priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session and SFY 25 Budget



Reconcile with Counties for Outstanding Federal Medicaid Funding

Since SFY 2016-17, the State of New York has withheld millions of dollars in the Affordable Care Act and now Family First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) enhanced FMAP funding. Historically, the State has reconciled county Medicaid contributions at the end of each fiscal year, returning additional federal dollars owed to counties. We are asking the state to establish a strategic fund for these eFMAP reconciliations.



Reform the In-Rem Tax Foreclosure Process

- Enact reforms to the in-rem tax foreclosure process to comply with the *Tyler v. Hennepin County, MN (2023) Supreme Court decision*.
- Support S.1634-A (Kavanagh) / A.4026 (Rosenthal) to allow local land banks to bring abandoned properties into productive use.



Reform the Public Safety Surcharges & Invest in 9-1-1 Communications

- Support S.4560 (Martinez) / A.6290 (Jean-Pierre) to increase the statewide interoperable communications grant (SICG) and public safety answering points (PSAP) grants by \$25 million and \$30 million, respectively, to provide needed support for implementing next generation 9-1-1 (NG911) technology and continuity of emergency dispatching services.
- Support S.4583-A (Martinez) / A.5942-A (Jean-Pierre) to use a portion of the 9-1-1 surcharge revenue to fully fund and deploy a statewide ESInet and related infrastructure for NG911 technologies.



Authorize Sales Tax Collections for the Gig Economy

- Support S.885 (Hinchey)/A.4130-a (Fahy) to authorize gig economy industries, such as VRBO, AirBnB, and other vacation and home rental agencies to collect sales tax (outside of New York City).



Provide a Funding Model to Save the EMS System

- Support S.4020-A (Mayer) / A.3392-A (Otis) to provide our EMS partners with the resources they need.
- Support S.5000 (May) / A.4077 (Lupardo) to exempt EMS funding from the tax cap calculation.
- Support S.6630 (Mannion) / A.6274 (Barrett) to allow volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers to claim both state income and local property tax credits.
- Provide funding to cover 100% of the cost of EMT and AEMT training and state certification for volunteers.
- Support S.5122 (Rivera) / A.5133 (McDonald) to create a Uniform Ambulance Assessment Program, generating additional federal Medicaid funding for non-government EMS providers.
- Support legislation to reimburse EMS agencies for services delivered at a patient's residence and for transportation to an alternative healthcare setting such as an urgent care facility.



Children with Special Needs

Counties play a vital role in supporting children with special needs, running all Early Intervention (EI) services through local health departments (LHDs) or Youth Bureaus and funding preschool special education programs to ensure that all children who need preschool special education receive it at no cost to their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allow speech-language pathologist assistants and aides to practice via license, registration, or certification in New York’s early intervention program to expand capacity for children in need of services.
- Provide equal access to Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) special education students the same as traditional education students. The state created Universal Prekindergarten under the promise that it would fully fund this program at state expense. While the state has made substantial progress in expanding UPK, too often special education students are still being taught in segregated settings and funded under an antiquated system that requires counties and New York City to pay 40 percent of these program costs.
- Reform the way we transport children with special needs who attend early intervention and preschool center-based programming. Counties are experiencing significant increases in both early intervention and preschool special education transportation costs. School districts and regional BOCES should be required to transport these children, as they already have the infrastructure in place and are transporting their peers to local school programs. Counties are willing to partner with the state and school districts or regional BOCES to help pay for the transportation of these students to avoid a negative financial impact on school districts.
- Fund incentives to become special educators. As part of the SFY 25 Budget, the Governor should allocate funding for incentives to encourage students to consider speech, occupational or physical therapy, and other special education fields.
- Increase the administrative cost reimbursement rate for counties to equal the administrative reimbursement rate paid to school districts for their students.





Community Colleges & Higher Education



Counties create, sponsor, and fund community colleges, while also paying a share of their residents' community college tuition. In recent years, the state has reduced its contribution to community college funding below its historic commitment of at least one-third. The state is also required to reimburse counties for Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) chargebacks but has not provided the necessary appropriations to comply with this state law requirement.

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Set the base state aid formula allocation for each community college to 100% of the prior year or increase \$100 per FTE, whichever is greater.
- Modify the institutional classification of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) from a community college to a regular SUNY university or otherwise ensure 100% state reimbursement to counties for students attending FIT for 4- and 6-year degrees.
 - If the state deems it impossible to fully fund the FIT requirement, it should consider an interim step of fully funding FIT chargebacks to counties related to all educational instruction provided after two years, or the completion of an associate degree (i.e. coursework necessary for a 4-year and/or master's degree).
- Increase the state share for community college base aid to 40% of a school's operating budget. The lack of sufficient state fiscal support has required counties to pay more through increased chargeback rates and forced students to pay higher tuition and fees.





Economic Development & Agriculture

60-hour Overtime Threshold for Farm Workers

The Farm Laborers Wage Board is charged with making a recommendation on whether to reduce the current 60-hour overtime threshold for farm workers to 40 hours. In January 2022, after numerous public hearings on the issue that included testimony from farmers, farm workers, and industry stakeholders, the Wage Board recommended lowering the threshold.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Counties oppose any decrease to the 60-hour farm worker overtime threshold adopted by the Farm Laborers Wage Board and the NYS Department of Labor.
- Repeal section 674-a of the Labor Law relating to establishing the Farm Laborers Wage Board, thereby eliminating the three-member board.

Deploy ConnectALL Funds & Expand Access to Cellular Service

On October 27, 2020, the Federal Communications Commission adopted a report establishing the 5G Fund for Rural America, which will make up to \$9 billion available to bring 5G mobile broadband service to rural areas. The 5G Fund will help ensure that rural Americans enjoy the same benefits from our increasingly digital economy as their urban counterparts and will include a special focus on deployments that support precision agriculture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact A.30 (Woerner) / S.26 (Stec), the “Wireless Broadband Eligible Facility Permitting Act”, to ensure New York State is ready to rapidly deploy ConnectALL and 5G for Rural America funds.
- Mandate providers build out middle-mile and final-mile broadband infrastructure before obtaining ConnectALL grant funding.





Environment

Counties play an important role in preserving and protecting the environment. From protecting our drinking water to promoting recycling and climate resiliency, counties across New York State are acting locally to have an impact globally.

In the face of global recycling market volatility that has caused unsustainable cost increases, additional state support is needed to maintain recycling programs. Additional support is also needed to fortify our state's water infrastructure.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the Bottle Bill to include additional glass containers—including liquor, wine, and iced tea bottles—to increase recovery and recycling rates and improve curbside recycling quality.
- Reject adding additional plastic and aluminum containers to the Bottle Bill, as this would remove over \$10 million in value from curbside bins that are used to offset the cost of local recycling programs.
- Enact S.4246-A (Harckham)/A.5322-A (Glick), to help address skyrocketing costs by establishing an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for paper and packaging.
- Establish a Safe Water Infrastructure Program, S.4350-A (Hinchey) / A.6155 (Gunther), to offer assistance to local governments for drinking water, stormwater, and sanitary sewer infrastructure. The bill would require the State Department of Environmental Conservation to invest at least the same annual amount in local water infrastructure projects as is invested in local CHIPS projects.
- Enact S.1650 (Holman)/A.5979 (Burdick), to provide all New Yorkers with information on the quality of their drinking water.





Gaming

Making Municipalities Whole for Lost Gaming Revenue

Several counties that are entitled to revenue from the state’s agreement with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe have not received payments since the last quarter of 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately make municipalities whole for funding that is being withheld by the state.

Commercial Gaming Tax Reduction Impact Appropriation

The 2022 State Budget lowered the tax rate on commercial casinos to support the industry, jobs, and economic activity they provide to communities. Coupled with this tax break, the budget included a one-time \$7 million appropriation to hold counties harmless for the resulting decrease in shared tax revenue. This appropriation was raised to \$10 million in the SFY 23 Budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make a permanent annual appropriation of \$15 million to offset any local funding decrease that results from the state’s private casino tax reduction.





General Government & Shared Services

Intergovernmental Affairs & Shared Services

Counties have long used shared services and consolidating functions as primary tools to improve local government efficiency. Over the last several years, the state has enacted a variety of shared services initiatives to encourage more consolidation and service sharing at the local level. In the SFY 2017-18 Budget, state lawmakers enacted the Countywide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI), which required county leaders to convene meetings with other local government leaders to develop new shared services and consolidation proposals designed to save local tax dollars. The final budget included \$225 million in state matching funds for shared services.



While counties continue to pursue expanded shared services, it remains a challenge to develop plans and meet the requirements to draw down state matching funds for the savings generated from these projects. The CWSSI program has been extended until 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adjust property tax cap provisions that work against local shared services and consolidations.
- Allow a portion (up to 25%) of the CWSSI program funding to be used for plan development and implementation.
- Enact S.3554 (Breslin)/A.4412 (Steck) to ease the creation of local government health insurance consortia under Article 47 of the Insurance Law.
- Require the DOS to issue an interim report of the projects that have been completed and have met the criteria for state-matching funds from local savings.
- Provide funding for a dedicated, full-time FOIL Officer in each county to assist with FOIL compliance.
- Provide county boards of elections with more flexibility when identifying and operating early voting polling sites.
- Provide \$20 million in state operating aid and \$15 million in recurring state capital aid to counties to help administer federal, state, and local elections.
- Commit to the long-term funding of endpoint detection and response solutions for local governments.



Human Services

Counties play a critical role in providing residents with human services by funding and/or administering nearly all state and federal health and human service mandates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase state aid to counties for preventative child protective services by enacting S.5326 (Brisport) / A.2807 (Hevesi).
- Remedy the adoption cost shift to counties contained in SFY 23 State Budget by reimbursing counties a minimum of \$200 million to comply with this expanded mandate.
- Make permanent housing the central focus of state homelessness prevention goals. A key component should target supportive housing overseen by OMH, OASAS, DOH, and OPWDD to prevent homelessness and quickly re-house people who become homeless.
- Fully fund the costs of any services the state continues to make counties provide when the federal government ends its federal financial support.
- Restore county authority to audit individuals applying for Medicaid and other social service programs to ensure program integrity and that clients are not inappropriately made eligible for these programs.
- Restore Safety Net state matching funds to a 50/50 state and local match.
- Restore open-ended child welfare funding to 65% state share.
- Restore the state's participation in child support administration.
- Restore SNAP administration reimbursement.
- Lower county and New York City statutory Medicaid caps to reflect current payments and savings provided by the Affordable Care Act.
- Require NYSDOH to:
 - Implement the Community First Choice Option, (not the local districts),
 - Pursue collection and litigation for spousal refusal versus the LDSS,
 - Pursue the Right of Election, and
 - Take over cases where Medicaid incorrectly paid the provider.
- Enact a 50-50 recovery partnership between counties and the state (through OMIG) to conduct retroactive and prospective reviews of county incarceration files to ensure Medicaid-managed care companies were not inappropriately reimbursed for monthly premiums while an individual was in the county jail.
- Eliminate the issuance of home relief to those who have exhausted their 60-month limit on TANF.



Judiciary

Judicial Funding

In 2021, state leaders created an additional 14 Supreme Court judgeships. The Office of Court Administration (OCA) estimated this would cost counties \$14 million to provide facilities and judicial chambers for these new judges.

In 2022, Governor Hochul signed legislation creating another 14 Supreme Court judgeships and seven more family court judgeships. OCA estimates this will cost counties \$21 million for judicial chamber construction.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Allocate \$50 million to offset the capital costs of increasing the number of Supreme Court judges.

- Fully fund the mandated DA salary increase as part of the 2023-24 State Budget and thereafter, including a one-time appropriation for the retroactive salary increase that has not been funded to date.
- Fully fund parental representation in child welfare proceedings.

Judgement Interest Rates

When appealing a civil case judgment, the appealing party is exposed to paying interest on the lower court settlement ruling while awaiting the higher court determination. Judgment interest rates, set by New York law, are the highest in the nation, currently fixed at nine percent. Appeals can take multiple years to be heard, which costs counties and the State millions of dollars while waiting for a ruling. Most states and the federal government link their judgment interest rates to federal interest rates.

Changing New York’s judgment interest rate to match or reflect the current federal rates is an equitable commonsense approach and will save state taxpayer dollars.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lower court judgment interest rates by enacting S.3250 (Sanders) / A.5016 (McDonald) (2021).



Local Finance & Tax Relief

Nearly 10 years ago, New York State mandated that local governments adhere to a property tax cap of two percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. At the time, the state promised a robust package of mandate reforms that would help local governments stay under the tax cap. While state leaders did cap county Medicaid costs and implement a new pension tier to slow the growth in state-mandated costs, dozens of more mandates were not addressed, and others were added.

In recent years, the state has begun to unlearn the lessons of the past and returned to the practice of shifting the costs associated with state mandates onto county governments.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Require all state legislation to include a statement of fiscal impact affecting local governments as outlined in S.5966 (Harckham) / A.305 (Burdick).
- Grant counties sales tax permanency at their existing rates and authorize all counties to raise sales tax rates to 4% as outlined in Part O of S.4009/A.3009 (2023), Part U of S.8009/A.9009 (2022), and Part L of S.2509/A.3009 (2021).
- Allow counties to set other home rule revenue tax rates up to the most common rate existing in other counties across the state without state legislative approval. This would include, but not be limited to, mortgage recording taxes, occupancy taxes, real estate transfer taxes, etc.
- Authorize gig economy industries, such as VRBO, AirBnB, and other vacation and home rental agencies, to collect sales tax (outside of New York City), by enacting S.885-B / A.4130-A (Fahy).
- Eliminate the use of “dark store theory” as a way to lower property tax assessments and create a task force to identify solutions.
- Grant counties the authority to be included in the state’s debt set-off program for any outstanding debt totaling \$50 or more.
- Enact “No New Unfunded Mandates” legislation.
- Cap current state-mandated costs at a rate that does not exceed the state-imposed property tax cap.
- Allow reserve funds to be used for public health and safety emergencies, and update tax stabilization reserve fund provisions.



Medicaid

The state has long acknowledged that requiring counties and New York City to pay for a share of Medicaid and a wide variety of other state social services programs increases local taxes to levels that far exceed the norm in other states.

At \$7.6 billion, the counties of New York are mandated to pay more for Medicaid than all the remaining counties in the country combined. This places New York State at a dramatic disadvantage to other states in terms of affordability and attractiveness to business.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Finalize unfinished Medicaid Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (eFMAP) Affordable Care Act reconciliations for state fiscal years 2017-2023 and COVID eFMAP reconciliations for 2020-2023.
- Fully fund the foster care rate increases included in the SFY 2023 Budget. Initial estimates of new costs upon full implementation are \$117 million for New York City and \$83 million for the 57 counties.
- Preserve the county Medicaid cap to ensure counties have the resources to provide local health and human services and reduce pressure on property taxes.
- Provide fiscal resources and incentives to address the severe deficit of qualified home healthcare professionals in many areas of New York. These incentives should include:
 - career ladders,
 - assistance with transportation (car loan forgiveness) or bus passes,
 - a traveling per diem staff pool,
 - assistance with childcare,
 - job sharing,
 - career milestone incentives, and
 - standardizing language and communication needs.
- Coordinate a timely transition to supportive housing for the highest need individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues in collaboration with OTDA, other state agencies, and local social services districts, especially those that have been repeatedly homeless and in need of supportive placements overseen by OMH, OASAS, OPWDD and DOCCS.
- Lower county and New York City statutory Medicaid caps to reflect current payments and savings provided by the Affordable Care Act.
- Complete the takeover of the administration of the Medicaid program from local districts as required under state law. Counties have downsized their Medicaid administrative operations as part of the process to date, but the state continues to add more responsibilities to counties for most complex parts of the Medicaid.



Public Employee/Personnel

Scaffold Law/ Wicks Law Reform

Both the “Scaffold Law” (Labor Law §240 and §241) and “Wicks Law” (General Municipal Law §101) are outdated and unnecessarily raise construction costs for municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reform Scaffold Law to include a pure standard of comparative negligence (S.1703 (Gallivan) 2021).
- Reform the NYS Wicks Law by raising current thresholds to at least \$5 million for all entities currently subject to limits to adjust for inflation.

Modernize Civil Service Law

The State Civil Services system needs to be updated and improved to help county governments compete with the private sector for employees. At the very least, we recommend the following changes to NYS Civil Service Law to allow for greater local government flexibility and quicker response times for hiring needed employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Amend Public Officers Law §3 to allow for home rule authority to set employee residency rules.
- Expand the acceptable zone of “band scoring” of civil service examinations, thereby accessing a larger pool of candidates.
- Pass legislation to disqualify applicants from civil services eligible lists who are inappropriate for a role in law enforcement or corrections as evidenced by a failed background check or psychological examination.
- Expand the acceptable zone of “band scoring” of civil service examinations, allowing access to a larger pool of candidates.
- Eliminate the need for applicants to cross-file in adjacent municipalities to have their test scores counted for the same title in multiple jurisdictions.
- Allow all, or as many as may be practicable, tests to be administered locally.
- Change all or certain subsets of exams to pass/fail. Limiting the ‘reachable’ applicants to the top three based on numeric score continues to be a major issue in certain titles, especially those in public safety where additional background and psychological testing is required.
- Construct reforms that follow county models of success, such as Livingston County’s, “GLOW With Your Hands” initiative to introduce students to hands-on jobs and Monroe County’s RETAIN and Mpower initiatives designed to connect students with in-demand jobs in Monroe County.
- Establish a new exempt class of employees for airport positions.



Public Health

Local health departments are New York State’s partners and operational extensions, addressing public health issues and serving as the first line of local defense against all public health crises. Activities led by the 58 local health departments across New York State are paramount to our collective ability to achieve prevention agenda goals, address health disparities, improve health outcomes, and ensure community safety and stability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact S.1531 (Hoylman) / A.7154 (McDonald) to require healthcare providers to enter adult immunizations into the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS)/Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR).
- Strengthen statutory language prohibiting the sale of flavor additives for nicotine vapor products, as sellers have found a loophole that allows them to sell flavored products that can be added to vapor products.
- Introduce and pass legislation to require a state system or mechanism for vetting volunteers for public health emergency response.
- Amend subdivision 14 of Cannabis Law Section 77 to ensure that sites that receive on-site consumption licenses are not located on the same premises as sites subject to the Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA).





Mental Health

Mental Health Competency Restoration

When an individual charged with a crime is found by a court not to understand the charges against them or to be unable to aid in their defense, they are deemed to be incompetent to stand trial. Once this occurs, the defendant is usually sent to a state facility to receive “restoration services” geared to restoring a defendant’s competency to stand trial. A criminal defendant must be restored before the legal process can continue. This process is governed by New York’s Criminal Procedure Law Section 730.

The SFY 21 Enacted Budget included an assumption that required counties to reimburse the state for 100 percent of the costs of competency restoration, at a current cost of approximately \$1000 per day. This policy action resulted in tens of millions of dollars of new expenses for county governments.

These expenses are not determinable at the time county budgets are passed and the county mental health department has little to no input concerning the type of services rendered nor the length of time the defendant is to receive such services.

NYSAC, in partnership with the Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors (CLMHD), has developed a series of statutory reforms which will help achieve the recommendations as set forth by the Council of State Governments Justice Center.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reform the process of Mental Health Competency Restoration by enacting S.1874 (Brouk) / A.5063 (Gunter). This legislation:
 - Clarifies that competency restoration is not the same as mental health treatment,
 - Establishes specific criteria for 730 examiners, streamlining the process to establish equity across the system (CPL § 730.20),
 - Requires that the psychiatrist or psychologist conducting the psychiatric exam tells the court whether there is a reasonable chance of restoration, thereby granting the court an opportunity to allow diversion to mental health treatment (CPL § 730.20),
 - Adjusts the fee for reimbursing psychiatric examiners (CPL § 730.20),
 - Limits the time of restoration services (CPL § 730.50),
 - Allows individuals to be transferred to Article 9 facilities so they can receive actual mental health treatment (MHL § 9.33), and
 - Requires local government units (counties) to reinvest savings from these reforms into community mental health services (MHL § 43.03).



Public Infrastructure & Transportation

Local Roads and Bridges

Locally owned roads and bridges account for 87 percent of the state’s 110,000 miles of roadways and over 50 percent of the state’s 18,000 bridges. Increases in the state’s local road and bridge funding programs are expected to have a positive impact on the condition and resiliency of our transportation systems. Unfortunately, inflation and fuel costs will offset the historic funding levels for CHIPS, PAVE-NY, BRIDGE-NY, and Extreme Winter Recovery enacted in last year’s budget.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide additional funding in the next state transportation budget (SFY 25) for the 5-Year Transportation Capital Plan to account for recent inflation.
- Enact A.426 (Magnarelli) to increase the CHIPS bidding threshold to \$750,000. An increase in the threshold would give localities the flexibility and option to bid out or perform in-house projects under \$750,000.
- Extend design-build authority to counties, allowing local governments to use this method would reduce costs and speed project completion.



Upstate Airports

Regional airports are critical access points to counties and are vital to economic development. The SFY 23 Enacted Budget included \$100 million for a new “Upstate Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Competition” and another \$12.5 million to be allocated through the Aviation Capital Grant Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build on SFY 23 investment in upstate airports by maintaining a \$250 million appropriation in the SFY 24 Enacted Budget.
- Enact S.2725 (Skoufis) / A.1341 (Lupardo), authorizing DEC to issue enhanced special airport air strike hazard permits to federal or state government employees and other professionals responsible for wildlife management at an airport.



Public Safety

Counties operate and maintain 9-1-1 functions, county jails, road patrol, and public safety functions through their sheriff departments and/or county police forces. These functions make us responsible for implementing many of New York's substantial justice reform initiatives over the past five years, including raising the age of criminal responsibility, reforms to bail, discovery, and speedy trials, gun law reforms, and enhanced orders of protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact A.6452 (Solages) / S.396 (Cleare) to expedite the distribution of state aid for the Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP).
- Enact A.1091 (Kelles) / S.1852 (Hinchey) to create a state aid program for emergency medical services (EMS), modeled after the CHIPS program.
- Grant counties the flexibility to create and authorize county-wide EMS taxing districts for underserved communities and exclude this initiative from the property tax cap calculation by enacting S.4020-A (Mayer) / A.3392-A (Otis).
- Establish a \$50 million, 5-year program for counties to address gun violence through youth development programs and services. These grants should provide maximum discretion to counties.
- Enact legislation providing home rule authority to local governments to ban sex offenders in short-term rentals.
- Grant county probation departments the flexibility to quickly make an application for a temporary order of protection as a part of the adjustment process.
- Eliminate the requirement that there be a sentence of conditional discharge or probation for Leandra's Law cases when a defendant has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment.
- Establish a dedicated funding stream through DCJS/OPCA for 100% of all local probation costs, including but not limited to, probation personnel and evidence-based programming associated with the Raise the Age law.
- Reform the Raise the Age law to require the State to develop alternatives to jails and specialized secure detention facilities to house the growing population of 16- and 17-year-old Adolescent Offenders and Juvenile Delinquents and enact .
- Authorize law enforcement agencies to issue appearance tickets instead of a physical arrest when adolescent offenders (AO's) and junior offenders (JO's) are charged with Class D felonies.
- Authorize court consolidation.
- Enact A.3743 (Simpson) / S.2033 (Stec) to allow any county within the state to conduct electronic court appearances for defendants.



Veterans

New York's county governments provide important services for the 676,000 veterans living in our state.

The SFY 23 Budget included an increase in the minimum annual State funding to Veterans' Service Agencies from \$10,000 to \$25,000, as well as \$7.7 million to expand the Joseph P. Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Veterans' Support Program, which provides peer support and counseling services to veterans transitioning from military service to civilian life. While counties applaud these measures, additional action is needed to create long-term sustainability in veteran programming.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase state funding to county veterans' service agencies to a minimum of \$50,000 to help counties hire a part-time veteran service officer to assist in processing benefit claims, link veterans to peer support services, and develop robust Dwyer programs. This \$1,550,000 state investment would amplify the work of county veterans' service across New York.
- Increase the base aid for Joseph P. Dwyer grants to \$185,000 per county. Right now, Dwyer funds are not allocated equally across the state. Increasing the grant to \$185,000 per county would level that playing field. This would result in approximately \$3,585,000 in additional state resources for the Dwyer program.
- Expand the definition of "veteran" to recognize the service of Reserve or National Guard service members who have completed 20 years of service by enacting S.7683 (Thomas) / A.8113 (Jean-Pierre). Those individuals should be treated as veterans and receive access to the same services as those currently designated as a veteran under state law.
- Expand the Veterans Tuition Awards Program (VTAP) to allow the transfer of unused benefits to a spouse, survivor, or child by enacting S.2119 (Bailey) / A.2154 (Dinowitz).
- Create a veteran green energy jobs program to train and link veterans with sustainable, environmentally friendly jobs to meet the goals of the CLCPA. The NYS DOL, SUNY and DVS should partner to create the guidelines and program requirements for a new Veteran Green Energy Workforce Development program.

The United Voice of New York's Counties



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