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 Westchester County

THE ASSEMBLY  
 STATE OF NEW YORK  
 ALBANY

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 Subcommittee on  
 Employment Opportunities for  
 People with Disabilities

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 Banks  
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 Environmental Conservation  
 Housing  
 People with Disabilities  
 Veterans' Affairs

Secretary, Majority  
 Conference

**April 4, 2023 Update by Assemblymember Chris Burdick  
 to Supervisor Hansan and the Town Board of Pound Ridge**

It is an honor to represent Pound Ridge in the New York State Assembly and I'm glad to be back before this board. Thank you to Supervisor Hansan and the Pound Ridge Town Board for having me here and for being great partners.

**The State Budget**

We are in the midst of finalizing the 2023-2024 NYS Budget. The process started a couple of weeks later than the past two years because of the election cycle of the post of Governor. We've concluded joint budget hearings with the NYS Senate and now the Speaker of the Assembly, the Majority Leader of the State Senate and the Governor are negotiating to develop a three-way agreement.

Ideally, the budget would be passed by the start of the state's fiscal year on April 1, but more often than not a few extra days are required, with measures taken to ensure the state has the funds needed to bridge the gap. Last week we adopted a debt payment bill to meet bond and other credit obligations. Yesterday, we adopted an "extender" to pay the 31,000 state employees and other obligations.

The three-way negotiations are over differences between the Governor's proposed budget and the Legislature's response, known as the One-House resolution. Details of the Assembly's One-House budget are discussed below, and I remain optimistic that we will adopt a prudent, fiscally-sound budget, responsive to the needs of the state and my district. Here are highlights of the Assembly One-House budget (the Senate One-House budget is quite similar):

- **Public Schools, Pre-K & Childcare:** In agreement with the Governor, we are appropriating \$2.6 billion to the largest portion of State funding for public schools, Foundation Aid. This funding is the third and final step in the State's commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time since the formula was created in 2007. This investment is critical to maintaining the excellence of our public schools while holding down property taxes. Every school district in my Assembly District will receive a meaningful increase. We also are proposing \$200 million in additional funding for the Statewide Universal Full-Day Prekindergarten grant program, \$280 million in additional funds to make school meals free for all students, \$137.5 million for childcare funding, and a two-year tax incentive for employer-provided childcare.
- **Higher Education:** The Assembly rejects the Governor's proposed SUNY and CUNY tuition hikes. The proposal would provide additional operating and capital funds to offset the proposed hikes and provide for critical facilities maintenance. It also increases the income threshold for the

Tuition Assistance Program from \$80,000 to \$100,000 and provides an increase in funding for the State's community colleges.

- **Environmental Protection:** The Assembly proposes to increase funding for the Environmental Protection Fund by \$35 million to \$435 million and the clean water infrastructure program by \$100 million to \$600 million. It also provides \$200 million to expand the Energy Affordability Program (which provides income-eligible consumers with a discount on their monthly electric and/or gas bills, as well as other benefits), \$200 million to support NYSERDA's EmPower Plus program (which provides free energy-efficiency upgrades to income-eligible New Yorkers), and adopts a plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution arising from new construction projects.
- **Roads, Infrastructure, and Public Transit:** The Assembly believes we need to make a greater investment in this area, proposing an increase of \$100 million over the Governor's proposal for a total of \$1.33 billion in capital aid to localities for their local roads and highways. The proposal also would provide \$240 million for non-MTA transit capital projects, which supports the development and improvement of transit authorities outside of New York City (an increase of \$80 million over the executive's budget proposal), \$64.3 million in funding for passenger rail operation and construction efforts (an increase of \$20 million over the executive's proposal), and \$679.3 million for downstate non-MTA transit operating assistance (an increase of \$157 million over the executive's proposal, for a total year-to-year increase of \$197 million).
- **Access to Affordable Housing:** The Assembly proposes \$1.5 billion in assistance to tenants with arrears and for homeowner assistance, \$250 million for Homeownership Funds (to support investments in community land trusts, conversion of rental housing to homeownership housing, and tenant organization ownership of housing accommodations), and \$500 million in incentives to cities, towns, and villages for new housing development targets – removing the mandates (see the discussion below).
- **Medicaid, Hospitals & Health Care Workers:** The Assembly would provide \$2.7 billion in total funding to Medicaid, \$1.32 billion to hospitals in need, restore \$42.7 million to the voluntary Hospital Indigent Care Pool (subsidizing care for low-income patients while ensuring that hospitals are paid for their services), \$266.5 million to nursing homes, and \$50 million more for Community-Based Organizations. With a critical shortage of health care workers, many of whom seek employment elsewhere for higher wages, it also would provide a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) of 8.5% for human services providers, including mental hygiene agency workers, elder care workers, and foster care workers.
- **Business and Economic Development:** The Assembly would provide \$205.4 million, an increase of \$25 million, to support a workforce development grant program for green jobs training, and \$50 million for small-business grants, including for minority and women-owned businesses.
- **Libraries and the Arts:** The Assembly proposal restores and increases by \$5 million funding for libraries (to \$104.6 million) and provides an additional \$40 million in library capital, for a total of \$54 million. It also provides \$102.5 million for New York State Council on the Arts grants, which here in Westchester have been instrumental in revitalizing the arts throughout the pandemic and beyond.

- Assistance to New Americans: The Assembly proposes \$25 million for community-based programs (\$15 million above the executive’s proposal), \$20 million to assist people pursuing citizenship, \$10 million to community programs that prevent bias-based crimes, \$40 million for immigration legal services, \$7 million for the Refugee Resettlement program, and an expansion in health coverage for undocumented immigrants by rejecting a delay in expanding Essential Plan coverage, relieving increased pressure on emergency rooms.
- Public Safety & Criminal Justice: The Assembly proposal provides \$100 million for defense discovery funding, \$100 million for prosecutorial discovery funding, and \$69.3 million for anti-gun violence prevention programs.

## **An Update on the Housing Compact**

Governor Hochul's budget proposal included a housing plan with the goal of producing 800,000 new housing units within 10 years. The Governor intends to implement the new plan, the Housing Compact, by imposing targets on local governments to increase within three years their housing stock. The targets are 3% for downstate communities (including Westchester) and 1% for upstate communities.

To achieve this, the plan would require every downstate community with a non-seasonal rail station (including subway stations) to change its zoning to allow significantly greater housing density within a one-half-mile radius of the station – the closer to New York City, the greater the density. The Hochul plan also would mandate additional zoning changes to achieve the goal if it can’t otherwise be met, setting aside environmental review. If the targets still aren’t met, a state-level housing review board (created by the legislation) would be empowered to approve a proposed housing plan that the locality did not approve.

I fully agree with the need for a bold housing plan but take issue with the Governor’s approach. Unlike the five-year affordable housing plan already in place, this plan is aimed at increasing the overall housing stock with little attention to affordable housing – which is the overwhelming need here in Westchester County and throughout the state. I also take issue with the Governor’s plan to override the zoning control needed to ensure that the proposed development does not overwhelm police and fire protection or adversely impact the environment. It also disregards the fact that many local governments have already tried to stimulate housing development with new local laws such as promoting accessory dwelling units and creating new multifamily zoning districts.

On March 15, the NYS Assembly – with the State Senate following suit – responded with a housing growth plan system built on incentives and rewards for local governments that adopt the growth targets in the Hochul plan and achieve them. It would provide an initial incentive payment, scaled by population, to any locality that adopts the growth targets and files with the state a suitable growth plan by April 1, 2024. Once the target is reached, the locality would receive another reward payment. Meanwhile, it would be entirely up to the local government how to reach that target. If the locality fell short of the target, the state would “claw back” the initial payment in the form of a reduction of its aid from the state.

### **Important Areas of Agreement**

While I disagree strongly with certain aspects of the governor’s proposed budget, I also agree with significant portions of it. Unfortunately, public discussion of some of her more controversial proposals, such as the Housing Compact, may overshadow those areas of the budget on which both the Legislature and Governor agree. In fact, there is more on which we agree than on which we disagree. and homeowners, and additional funding for gun violence prevention programs.

I am pleased that the Governor is proposing a \$250 million fund for critical infrastructure projects triggered by plans for increased housing, such as sewer and water infrastructure. In this regard, I mentioned to NYS Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner Visnaukas the challenges of those municipalities within the NYC watershed, where there is a potential collision between the plan and watershed protections. There are regulations on development in these areas due to the increase in wastewater which would be created.

I was pleased that the Governor's plan for public safety recognizes the need to address the underlying causes of crime including joblessness, lack of affordable housing, and mental health. She has pledged to strengthen mental health care both with increased funding and increased capacity for inpatient psychiatric treatment by 1,000 beds as well as adding 3,500 housing units serving individuals with mental illness. She also is proposing initiatives and investments to reduce gun and violent crime.

**Other key components of the plan include:**

- Raising the minimum wage annually and indexing it to inflation.
- Following the historic approval by the people of the \$4.2 billion environmental bond in November, the Governor is proposing a Cap-and-Invest program to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Combat Climate Change
- \$165 Million in Relief to More than 800,000 Utility Customers
- Plan to Make Child Care More Affordable, Accessible, and Fair in New York

**Fully Funding Foundation Aid**

The Governor and the Legislature are in complete accord in completing the commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid, the key funding for public school education so important to maintaining the excellence of our schools while holding down property taxes. This would be the third and final year in the three-year phased commitment. We then will need to turn our focus to amending the formula for the allotments under Foundation Aid. I have spoken with State Senator Shelley Mayer who chairs the State Senate Education Committee. It will be an arduous task, but I think we all recognize the need.

**Grants and Assisting Municipalities**

I am cautiously optimistic that the budget process will allow members to nominate municipalities in their district for grants for capital projects – SAM grants. As you know, I secured in 2021 a \$125,000 grant for Pound Ridge for its park.

I am currently working closely with Supervisor Hansan and Town Board member Ali Boak in helping to secure funds for wastewater projects under consideration for the business district.

I also will continue to work to secure funding for Community-Based Organizations, such as Neighbors Link, The Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, Girls Inc, the Community Center of Northern Westchester, Friends of Karen, The Loft, Hope's Door, Latino U College Access, and others. In addition to funding, we have been able to supply many Community-Based Organizations with masks and tests, especially when these were hard to come by. Working alongside these incredible CBO's has been so valuable in trying to meet the needs of all the residents in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Assembly district.

## **2023 Legislative Session**

I am very pleased that in my last term in the State Assembly, 16 of my bills were signed into law. So far in 2023, I have introduced or will be introducing bills to:

1. Prohibit state agencies and the legislature from requiring or approving travel to any state that has enacted discriminatory laws after June 26, 2015.
2. Prohibit the unlawful disclosure of a sexual assault victim's DNA or RNA evidence; and limits the use of a sexual assault victim's DNA or RNA evidence in an unrelated proceeding.
3. Enshrine in the state constitution statutory rights provided to the LGBTQ+ community.
4. Require state agencies and entities to ensure their websites are accessible to persons with disabilities.
5. Require state agencies to develop a 5-year accessibility plan providing full access to the physical facilities, services, programs, and activities for persons with disabilities.
6. Prohibit the termination of tenancy in certain housing occupied by senior citizens and/or persons with disabilities.
7. Revise the penal code to expand the definition of rape.
8. Establish the Purple Star program to assist the children of active military who are transferred.

I wish to emphasize that I am very much open to hearing your ideas on legislation to improve the quality of life and address problems confronting this community.

## **Constituent Issues**

And lastly, the most important part of my job is taking care of my constituents directly. My office staff helps constituents deal with things such as unemployment fraud, DMV issues, and any problems in dealing with any NYS agency. If we can't help directly, we are almost always able to put people in touch with the right agency, government entity, Community Based Organization, or nonprofit that can help them. If you have a concern about a bill or simply an opinion that you would like to voice, we welcome all. I can't guarantee that we will always agree but we will always listen. Hearing from my constituents allows me to better represent my district. So please feel free to reach out to my office with any concerns, issues, or problems.