



Schuyler Center's Last Look at the State Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget

On April 1, 2020, the New York State Legislature and Governor reached agreement on the 2020-21 State Budget. Schuyler Center's *Last Look* is our assessment of the enacted State budget as it compares to priorities that improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, especially children and families living in poverty.

The Budget was finalized and passed as the State was being buffeted by the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Since mid-March, continuing to date, most New Yorkers have been largely confined to our homes to contain the spread of the virus, schools have moved to remote learning, and all but essential businesses have closed or moved online. More than 10,000 of our fellow New Yorkers have died of the virus, and tens of thousands more have fallen ill. With many businesses on pause, unemployment has skyrocketed, family incomes are on the decline, and more and more New York households are running short of food and other necessities. Meanwhile, essential workers have been working long hours, at great personal risk – in health care, public safety, grocery stores, public transit, group homes and child care providers – to keep New York running and New Yorkers safe. With the economic costs of the pandemic increasing each day, the Governor's most recent estimate is that New York is now facing a deficit that is more than \$10 billion.

It is clear: this virus, like most, *does* discriminate. The health and economic consequences of this pandemic are disproportionately hitting low-income communities and people of color.

The spectre of the pandemic is evident in the Final New York State Budget. Of note, the Final Budget omitted some of the modest new investments in children and families that were contained in the Governor's Executive Budget, including the Governor's proposed expansion of the child tax credit to correct New York's counterintuitive exclusion of young children from the state's child tax credit.

Significantly, the Final Budget gives the Governor broad authority to open the budget and make "adjustments" at three different points in the year should the state face a "budget imbalance." Adjustments are to be done uniformly across the board to the extent practicable. The Governor's first opportunity to open the budget and present proposed cuts comes after April 30, 2020. The Legislature will have ten days to present a counter proposal; if it cannot meet that deadline, the Governor's cuts will go into effect.

We recognize the grave challenges New York is facing as it continues to battle the pandemic, and deeply appreciate the steady, compassionate leadership of Governor Cuomo and our legislative leaders. We are concerned, however, that New York communities with the least power and fewest resources stand to be most severely impacted by deep, across the board, budget cuts. We will pay close attention in the coming weeks and months when the budget may be reopened and cuts imposed.

CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

Preventive, Protective, Independent Living, Adoption, and Aftercare Services

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes a \$25 million cut in state funding for preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services accomplished by shifting \$40 million from the TANF Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) to be spent on child welfare services. This increases the child welfare minimum spending threshold within FFFS funds from \$342.3 million to \$382.3 million, for a total investment of \$610 million. This shift raises two concerns:

- This collective \$40 million reduction of FFFS funding will mean that counties will have to cut or eliminate programs currently relying on these funds, all of which are services for low-income seniors and families, services in ever greater demand due to COVID-19.
- This shift will also leave counties with fewer dollars available to draw down preventive services, which could result in an overall reduction in preventive services.

The **Final Budget** once again reduces the State share for preventive, protective, independent living, adoption, and aftercare services to 62% from 65% (as is written in statute). This reduction in the State share has been made through the budget every year since the 2008 recession.

The budget also maintains funding at \$12.1 million for the Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) program, continuing to limit that funding to counties that were funded when the COPS program was cut in 2008.

Background

Localities use the open-ended preventive funding stream to pay for child protective services and services to prevent children from entering, or re-entering, foster care. Counties use FFFS funding to support social services programs, including those for low-income seniors and families. The budget's proposal may leave counties with fewer dollars to use for preventive services at a time when New York should be bolstering its preventive services as it prepares for full implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. While State reimbursement to counties is written into statute at 65%, it has been reduced to 62% through the budget every year since 2008.

The State's underinvestment in prevention is shortsighted and harmful to families. It should take a more strategic approach to prevention by increasing overall investment, and making more services available further upstream as primary prevention, before there is any documented risk of entry into foster care.

Foster Care Block Grant

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** does not restore the \$62 million cut to the Foster Care Block Grant included in the 2017-18 Enacted Budget, and instead maintains funding of the Block Grant at \$383.5 million.

Background

Counties use the Foster Care Block Grant to pay for foster care and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (subsidized guardianship) program. A reduced block grant means that counties assume a higher share of spending for their foster care systems.

Prevention and Post-Adoption Services

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** invests \$7.6 million in adoption assistance savings derived from a higher federal share of adoption assistance into post-permanency services and services to prevent children from entering foster care. This amounts to level funding compared to last year's final budget.

Background

Post-permanency services are available to families after an adoption or guardianship arrangement has been finalized to help support families in meeting the needs of children and youth who had been in foster care, many of whom have experienced significant trauma and loss.

Family First Transition

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** funds the Family First Transition Fund at \$3 million. This amounts to level funding for the fund's second year.

The budget also creates a federal Family First Transition Act account, appropriating \$75 million in new, one-time federal funding: \$25 million directed to Family First implementation and \$50 million for programs that have expiring projects with Title IV-E waivers.

Background

The Family First Preventive Services Act, which passed Congress in early 2018, fundamentally changes the approach to child welfare financing. Under the law, new requirements will be in place around the use of federal funding to support children in group home settings to encourage states to place more children with foster families, including relatives. States will also be allowed to use some federal foster care dollars to fund evidence-based preventive services.

Last year, New York State created a Family First Transition Fund to support counties' efforts to recruit and support foster and kinship families in preparation for implementation of the new Family First Prevention Services Act. While the fund has supported important county efforts, more funding is needed to ensure all counties receive robust enough support to take the steps necessary to move as many children as possible out of congregate care and into family-based settings.

Kinship Navigator and Kinship Caregiver Services

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** cuts kinship caregiver services by nearly \$1 million from last year, jeopardizing 11 of the 19 programs available across the state. Total funding for kinship caregiver services is \$1.3 million. The Assembly added \$950,000 to the \$338,750 included in the Executive Budget, leaving a \$950,000 shortfall compared to last year's enacted budget.

The **Final Budget** also provides \$320,500 in funding for the statewide Kinship Navigator information and referral network. The Assembly added \$100,000 to the Executive's \$220,500, bringing the total funding level compared to last year's enacted budget.

Background

Kinship caregiver programs offer important support and services to people who care for relatives' minor children outside of the formal foster care program. Programs provide information about family members' rights, support to meet children's education and health care needs, and assistance with obtaining benefits.

The Kinship Navigator is a statewide resource and referral network for kinship families, providing information and connections to important resources.

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP)

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** continues to fund KinGAP within the Foster Care Block Grant, as was done in previous budgets.

Background

KinGAP provides relatives in certified foster care settings a permanency option when both adoption and family reunification are ruled out. Many of these families require financial assistance to continue caring for a foster child in their household; with KinGAP, kinship families can exit the foster care system, provide a stable, permanent home for a kin child and continue to receive financial support. KinGAP is an important way to promote permanency for children and as such, should be funded outside of the Foster Care Block Grant through the adoption subsidy line, with no reduction to the Foster Care Block Grant.

Foster Care and Higher Education

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** allocates \$6 million in funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYSI) to support youth in foster care who pursue higher education to graduation. This represents level funding compared to last year's final budget.

The **Final Budget** also includes language detailing the flexibility of FYSI payments to students, specifically that they can be used during intersession and summer breaks and medical expenses (including mental health, vision, and dental care). This allows students to use this support in ways specific to their needs.

Background

The Schuyler Center is a member of the steering committee of the Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA), which is working to provide a realistic path to higher education for the State's youth in care.

Juvenile Justice

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes \$250 million for services and expenses related to raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction, which represents an increase of \$50 million from last year's final budget. Based upon language included in the statute, it is unlikely that New York City will be eligible to receive any of the funding.

The Final Budget directs the transfer of youth in the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities to Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) facilities by October 1, 2020. This measure provides for youth to be housed in a more appropriate and supportive setting in OCFS as opposed to adult settings in DOCCS.

This direction also ends the use of solitary confinement in Adolescent Offender facilities, a harmful practice where youth could be subjected to solitary confinement for up to 22 hours a day.

The **Final Budget** fails to restore \$41.4 million in funding to the Close to Home juvenile justice program, cut in the 2018-19 Enacted Budget.

Background

In 2017, New York State passed legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction. The legislation, which is being phased in, moved misdemeanors to Family Court, and created a new Youth Part of the criminal court for felonies, with the presumption that non-violent felonies will be moved down to Family Court, unless the district attorney files a motion within 30 days showing "extraordinary circumstances" that the case should remain in the Youth Part. Family Court judges will also preside over the Youth Part of the criminal court. As part of the legislation, youth will be provided with rehabilitative services.

Close to Home is a juvenile justice reform initiative implemented in New York City and designed to keep youth close to their families and community. Under Close to Home, young people receive therapeutic services at small group homes, where they are close to resources that can support their successful transition back into their communities.

Human Services Workforce

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** does not include funding to strengthen the child welfare workforce, a workforce that is under extraordinary strain in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

According to the New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services, the child welfare system is facing a workforce crisis. Since 2008, the State has reduced human services funding by 26%, resulting in rates lower than in 1980. Nonprofits are expected to do more with less, but the sector cannot continue to provide quality services to communities without fair funding. The average human services worker lives at or below the poverty line. It has been 10 years since the state last provided a cost-of-living adjustment for the sector's workers.

New Yorkers – particularly our children – deserve qualified social workers and consistent services. Low salaries are one of the reasons the child welfare field has a high caseworker turnover. High turnover produces negative outcomes for children and families such as increased time to permanency, increased number of placements, and reduced ability to engage and build relationships with children and families. The human services workforce is overdue to receive the 3% increase on contracts and rates for the next 5 years advanced by the 3for5 campaign.

Statewide Central Register

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** reforms the Statewide Central Register (SCR). These reforms:

- Raise the standard of proof for a finding against a parent to “a fair preponderance of the evidence” on Jan 1, 2022, bringing New York in line with a majority of jurisdictions across the country, and better balancing child safety with fairness for parents;
- Protect parents by limiting SCR reporting for employment and other purposes for those where there was an indicated finding for child maltreatment to 8 years, helping mitigate barriers to employment that push families deeper into poverty, especially poor parents of color;
- Allow parents the ability to show evidence of rehabilitation at fair hearings challenging findings made against them; and
- Align records in the SCR with findings made by Family Courts, so that parents do not need to go through a duplicative process to clear their records if a Judge found there was not evidence of abuse or neglect.

Background

The Schuyler Center is a member of the steering committee of the New York State Child Welfare Coalition, which has worked in partnership with the Parent Legislative Action Network (PLAN) to advocate for these reforms.

WORKING FAMILY TAX REFORMS

Child Tax Credit

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** intentionally eliminated the Governor's proposal to expand the Empire State Child Credit to include children under age four in low-income families. As a result, New York's

child tax credit will continue to omit New York's youngest children from a credit designed to offset the high costs of raising children.

Background

New York's Empire State Child Credit provides eligible taxpayers a credit equal to 33% of the federal child tax credit at the levels that existed prior to the passage of the 2018 federal tax overhaul, or \$100 per qualifying child, whichever is greater, for children age 4 through 17. The Governor's proposal would have begun to fill in this omission by extending the credit to young children (under age 4), with the credit available only to those taxpayers with a state adjusted gross income of \$50,000 or less. In contrast, for older children, the credit begins to phase out for single filers at \$75,000 and for joint filers at \$110,000 adjusted gross income. Expanding this credit would provide critical support to families with young children – families who are more likely to live in poverty than families with older children, and will need support to recover from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earned Income Tax Credit

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** allows the Tax Department to automatically issue refunds for the Earned Income Tax Credit to taxpayers who have unclaimed credits. This new administrative tool is an important way to ensure more eligible New Yorkers receive this tax credit. As New York's economy restarts, New Yorkers would benefit from an even stronger EITC – one that includes young, childless adults and immigrant ITIN filers, and a credit oriented around the rising minimum wage, and that pays out on a quarterly basis – to help them regain economic stability in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

The EITC is one of the best ways to "make work pay" for low-income families and individuals, and research shows that children of EITC recipients are healthier and do better in school. The state's EITC provides eligible taxpayers with children a refundable credit equal to 30% of the federal child tax credit. Non-custodial parents are also eligible for a credit, along with most childless adults – although this credit is considerably smaller.

However, a number of groups that would benefit from the credit are completely excluded from the federal and state EITC. Among them: young childless adults ages 18 to 25 at exactly the period in their lives when they are struggling to gain their footing in the workforce and build a nest egg for a future family. The poverty rate for young New York adults is 20%, far exceeding the 14% poverty rate for New York State overall. Another excluded group: many hard-working immigrants. At the same time, New York's EITC's structure should be reoriented around the state's rising minimum wage to ensure it continues to encourage work by phasing out slowly as recipients achieve economic security. Finally, the EITC would help working New Yorkers better meet their monthly bills if it was paid out on a quarterly basis, rather than once a year.

EARLY CHILDHOOD WELL-BEING

Maternal Health

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** invests \$4 million to reduce maternal mortality and connected to the creation of the maternal mortality review board (signed into law in August 2019), to develop implicit racial bias training, expand community health workers and build a data warehouse to support quality improvement activities for maternal health outcomes.

Background

Women in the United States are more likely to die from complications relating to childbirth than in many other wealthy countries. And among states, New York ranks 30th. Racial disparities in maternal deaths are significant: Black mothers in New York are four times more likely to die during childbirth than White or Asian mothers. Addressing maternal health is essential to ensure the health of children – and, by extension, the whole family.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes \$3.8 million for Nurse-Family Partnership, an \$800,000 increase over the Executive Budget, and a \$300,000 increase as compared to last year's budget. Healthy Families New York was level funded at \$26.1 million and funding for the Public Private Partnership at the Office of Children and Family Services that funded several Parent Child Plus and Parents as Teachers programs was eliminated (\$3.6 million).

There is no funding for other evidence-based home visiting programs.

Background

Maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting, a proven strategy for improving maternal and child outcomes, is available to less than five percent of families with young children in New York State and is entirely unavailable in some areas. A significantly higher investment is needed if New York aims to serve all communities with families in need and endeavor to ensure the best health and developmental outcomes for mothers, infants, and families.

Child Care

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes the same level of funding as last year for child care subsidies, which are the principal means of assistance for working families to cover the high costs of child care. Total 2020-21 funding for child care subsidies will be approximately \$832 million. The budget also projects receipt of additional federal CCDBG funds up to \$105 million (as has been the case for the last two years) which will be allocated as follows: (1) up to \$80 million to cover infant and toddler activities and new federal health, safety and quality requirements; (2) at least \$10 million to expand access to subsidized child care; and (3) additional funds (set at

\$8.75 million, and included in the above \$832 million) may be directed to implementing and increasing subsidy reimbursement rates. The budget also includes level funding for the Infant-Toddler Resource Network, up to \$6,532,000, which provides critical training and supports to providers serving our youngest New Yorkers, and level funding of \$5 million for QUALITYstarsNY, the State's quality rating and improvement system. Finally, the budget anticipates receiving up to \$200 million in federal funding to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. (New York will be receiving approximately \$160 million in child care funds from the recently passed federal CARES Act.)

Background

Currently, child care subsidies are available for fewer than 20% of New York families eligible for child care assistance. While child care represents a significant expenditure for families, much of the child care workforce struggles to get by on low wages. The shortage of investment in child care impedes parents' ability to achieve economic security, driving many working families into poverty. In 2018, New York took an important step in convening a Child Care Availability Task Force. We are part of this task force and believe it can play a critical role in significantly expanding quality, affordable child care. Unfortunately, this marks the third State Budget since Governor Cuomo signed the Task Force Legislation into law without meaningful new State investment in child care. The COVID-19 pandemic is straining an industry already on the verge of collapse due to years of public underinvestment and because parents cannot afford to pay the true cost of care. Without substantial public investment, lack of quality child care may severely hamper New York's economic recovery.

Pre-Kindergarten

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** does not include the Executive Budget's proposed \$15 million in new funding for pre-K, but maintains current pre-K funding, level with last year, which supports services for more than 121,610 preschoolers across the state and extends the deadline for lead teachers to become fully certified by a year, to June, 2021. The Final Budget includes \$750,000 in new funding for the state's first Regional Pre-K Technical Assistance Center, a pilot supported by the Long Island Pre-K Initiative. The Final Budget includes no rate increase for Pre-K special education.

Background

Nearly 77,000 4-year-olds outside New York City still lack access to full-day pre-K. The omission of the Executive Budget's modest step forward is a blow for New York's many 3- and 4-year-olds without access to pre-K. With current pre-K funding rates have been frozen, in some cases for several decades, many districts need increased resources just to sustain current services. Further, state funding for education, including pre-K, is still at substantial risk in the coming year, given the dramatic shortfall in state revenues and new authority given to the Governor to make mid-year cuts, starting April 30. Pre-K may also be at risk in the coming year as local school districts face likely shortfalls from local property taxes.

Early Intervention

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** reduces Early Intervention (EI) expenditures by \$8.1 million from the \$173 million included in the 2019-2020 budget, for a total of \$164.9 million, and does not include a covered lives assessment to bring needed additional revenue into the Early Intervention program and help ensure commercial insurance helps pay for services critical to young children's health and development.

Background

The Early Intervention program provides therapeutic and support services to eligible infants and toddlers under the age of three who qualify due to disabilities or developmental delays. Access to timely services is critical when delays are identified, yet data show that one in four children did not receive mandated Early Intervention services within the required timeframe. While last year's budget increased payment rates for some categories of providers, many EI providers, evaluators, and service coordinators were left out.

Afterschool Programs

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** maintains \$33 million in funding for Advantage After School, level funding as compared to last year's final budget. The Legislature added \$5 million to the Executive Budget proposal. The **Final Budget** also maintains level funding for the Empire State After-School program at \$55 million. The budget does not include the Executive proposal for a \$10 million increase for the Empire State After-School Program, making this the first year no additional investments were dedicated to the program.

Background

High-quality afterschool programs have been shown to help close the achievement gap for low-income children and enable families to achieve economic stability.

PREPARING FOR THE 2020 CENSUS

Counting Children in the 2020 Census

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes an additional \$10 million for census outreach. This is in addition to \$20 million of previously allocated funding that has not been spent.

Background

Every year, more than \$53 billion in federal funds is allocated to New York and localities based on Census data either directly or through Census population estimates or surveys that in turn rely on the Decennial Census. This includes \$6.7 billion for programs that benefit children, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (Child Health Plus), education grants, Head Start, foster care and child care assistance.

In 2010, New York experienced a significant undercount, including among young children who, for many reasons, are historically undercounted in the Census. Another undercount in 2020 could lead to a significant cut in programs that New York children and families rely upon. It could also lead to a loss of representation for New Yorkers in Congress and beyond, and distorted, inaccurate data. And, the impacts of an undercount would haunt us for a decade. With the Census having begun on April 1, 2020 – in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic – it is more critical than ever that New York prioritize robust get-out-the-count efforts immediately.

PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH COVERAGE, ACCESS AND CARE

Medicaid

Final Budget

The Governor convened a Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT II) to find \$2.5 billion in savings that he directed should have no impact on beneficiaries and not rely on local government as funding sources. The MRT II membership and process were roundly criticized for not including a breadth of perspectives and a lack of transparency. Details about MRT II Medicaid recommendations included in the budget can be found on the [Department of Health website](#).

The **Final Budget** does not include the Executive's proposal that would require New York City and counties to cover Medicaid spending increases beyond three percent per year, but includes language that dedicates a portion of county revenue to a fund for financially distressed hospitals and nursing homes.

The final budget anticipates emergency federal funding for Medicaid provided by Congress in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. The funding comes with maintenance of effort provisions that preclude states from making certain changes to their Medicaid programs, the likes of which are included in the MRT II recommendations approved in the budget. It is unclear how this will play out.

Background

New York State's Medicaid program provides coverage and access to services for more than seven million low-income and disabled children, adults, and seniors. For low-income seniors, Medicaid fills in gaps in Medicare coverage. This MRT II was on a very tight timeline to generate proposals in time for budget enactment and delivered a package of recommendations on March 19, leaving little time for negotiations of major cuts and programmatic changes.

Health Coverage

Final Budget

New York State acted quickly to create a special enrollment opportunity in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The **Final Budget** does not include any funding to expand health insurance coverage to New Yorkers not eligible for existing coverage or who find coverage unaffordable.

Background

Efforts at the federal level to destabilize the health insurance market created under the Affordable Care Act have begun to cause an erosion of coverage throughout the country and, even in New York, recent data indicates that coverage for children under age 5 has begun to slip. Protecting existing coverage is essential, but New York should also create opportunities for populations not currently enrolled to have access to health insurance options.

Local Public Health Funding

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** maintains reimbursement for the General Public Health Work (GPHW) program for local public health programs.

Background

Local public health programs have been on the front line of COVID-19 response and yet must also maintain their core functions. Public health programs maintain the health of populations and provide important services, such as maternal and child health programs, teen pregnancy prevention, tobacco control and disease prevention. Maintaining New York's strong public health infrastructure is essential for public safety, whether preventing the spread of contagious disease, like measles, or planning for and responding to a pandemic.

Lead Poisoning Prevention

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** maintains flat funding of \$9.7 million for lead poisoning protection activities.

Background

Lead poisoning is preventable. Sweeping changes in the definition of blood lead levels and requirements for remediation were passed last year with the support of public health officials but resources were not provided to adequately cover the costs of activities associated with surveillance, enforcement and abatement last year or in this year's proposed budget.

Health Workforce

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** reduces funding for the Center for Health Workforce Studies. It also fails to implement health workforce data collection, which would significantly augment the state's capacity to understand the health workforce landscape and effectively plan for public health emergencies.

Background

The health workforce is a vital part of New York's health care delivery system, which the current pandemic has amplified. Efforts to improve the quality of health services and expand access to care depend on the availability of an adequate supply of appropriately trained health workers. Robust information about the workforce is critical to evaluate existing needs and

capacity and to plan for the future. Cutting vital funds to New York's established entity that provides this information is shortsighted and inconsistent, particularly in the face of the current pandemic.

Adult Homes

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes significant changes to the Enhanced Quality of Adult Living (EQUAL) program, though funding remains the same as last year at \$6.8 million. The funding is now divided into two sections of the state budget. Funding in the *state operations budget* can pay for items such as clothing allowances, resident training to support independent living skills, improvements in food quality, outdoor leisure projects, and culturally recreational and other leisure events; and resident quality of life. Funding in the *capital projects budget* can finance capital improvement projects that will enhance the physical environment of the facility and promote a higher quality of life for residents. Any capital expense must receive approval by the Department of Health and cannot supplant the obligations of the facility operator to provide a safe, comfortable environment for residents in a good state of repair and sanitation.

Background

EQUAL provides adult home residents with services and programs that improve their quality of life. These include clothing allowances, air conditioners for resident rooms, improved food choices, and other items that the residents in each home decide are important. The Executive Budget language would have disenfranchised adult home residents, but the final language restores accountability and ensures residents have a strong voice in spending the funding.

Consumer Assistance for Health Insurance

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes \$3.4 million for the consumer assistance program after the Assembly added \$1.9 million to the Executive Budget proposal which represents level funding as compared to last year. This represents a \$500,000 cut to the program as compared to last year's budget.

Background

Consumer assistance programs help New Yorkers get and use health insurance. These essential programs provide assistance to New Yorkers as they enroll in and begin to use health insurance, thereby ensuring that insurance coverage translates into use of medical care, including preventive services.

Paid Sick Leave

Final Budget

The **Final Budget** includes a permanent Paid Sick Days policy that will ensure that the vast majority of workers in New York State will have the right to earn and use at least 40 hours a year of paid sick time each year. Paid sick time can be used should the worker fall ill, or to

pursue diagnosis, preventive or treatment, or to care for a family member facing physical or mental health issues. Leave is also available to access services related to sexual assault, domestic violence or sex trafficking. Under this policy, workers can begin to accrue sick days beginning in October 2020, and begin to use sick days beginning January 1, 2021. This is a policy that will prevent countless New Yorkers from having to choose between caring for their health, or receiving a paycheck. It will also benefit the public health of the state.

Background

Currently, many New Yorkers can lose pay, or even their job, if they miss even a day of work due to illness. This new law will prevent New York workers from having to choose between their health and their livelihood. Earlier in the session, New York enacted a COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave policy, which, in coordination with a recently passed federal Emergency Sick Leave policy will ensure that many New Yorkers impacted by COVID-19 can stay home if they fall ill with, or are exposed to, COVID-19, and receive paid leave.