

Dear Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Carl Heastie,

The passage of the 2021-2022 New York State budget is a critical milestone.

For decades, disinvestment in key public service sectors gave New York the ignominious distinction of being the nation's leader in inequality; it also created a devastating lack of preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic. As we faced this unprecedented public health crisis in early 2020, the state legislature voted not only to pass yet another austerity budget but also to provide the Governor with new and unnecessary emergency powers, passing up a critical opportunity to fight for progressive revenue and to curtail tax breaks on the ultra-wealthy.

One year later, we are thrilled to have seen the State Assembly and Senate supermajorities change course under your leadership, beginning the work of creating a more equitable New York. In particular, we commend the fulfillment of a long-overdue commitment to fully fund the foundation aid formula, which will begin to address the impact of systemic inequity on the millions of New York public school students. Likewise, we applaud the delivery of meaningful relief for small businesses and renters. And we could not be more proud to see our state lead the nation in the creation of an Excluded Workers Fund that will bring aid to many of the most essential New Yorkers for the first time since the pandemic began. It is often said that budgets are moral documents. Through that lens, we celebrate these first steps toward reversing a long legacy of disinvestment and economic disparity.

The budget is also a measure of the state of our democracy. Your commitment to bold and unified one-house resolutions sent a clear message to the public that the voices of local communities would be heard. And the intensity with which you held the line in negotiations led to a number of unprecedented victories. At the same time, the opacity of the negotiation process and the unaddressed imbalance of power toward the Executive remain serious obstacles to lasting transformation in our state.

So you have our deep gratitude, and also our determination that this collective fight must continue, extending the reach of investment in our collective well being. We cannot afford to perpetuate a scarcity mindset that forces underserved constituencies to fight over scraps while the rich get even richer in times of crisis. The failure to deliver meaningful help for the 92,000 New Yorkers sleeping in shelters and on streets, the paltry allocation of funding for NYCHA, and the lack of critical investments to reduce overdose deaths from a historic peak are among many instances of just how far we have to go. It is also essential that we learn from the past and avert a punishing fall from a fiscal cliff when federal funding runs out; we must commit to creating and sustaining year-over-year progressive revenue measures that will ensure that our victories live on.

New York could not have reached this milestone without our predecessors in this fight, the advocacy organizations that fought for decades to uplift the most marginalized communities in the state. With brave and forward-looking solidarity, they decided this year to join forces in a common cause, becoming partners in the Invest In Our NY coalition. Recognizing the righteousness of the aims, their many years of tireless work, and the benefit to the collective well being of all New Yorkers, our own groups - volunteer activist organizations from every region of the state - enlisted in the campaign.

We also want to acknowledge the participation of many of your own members in what was often a truly collaborative process. Just as our advocacy partners have our commitment to build on

this historic moment - to make it a true turning point - so do our legislative partners. We firmly believe that "democracy works best when we work together," as Leader Stewart-Cousins put it in her remarks on the budget. This campaign is proof of what can be achieved when the conferences embrace activist voices and engage in a shared mission, and we uplift it as a model for the future.

We hope to have the opportunity to meet with you in the coming months to debrief on a momentous legislative session and identify opportunities for future collaboration. We continue to envision a state where all can prosper, and we look forward to joining together in that ongoing work.

Signed,

Bend the Arc Jewish Action Riverdale
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Long Island
Bethlehem Indivisible
CCoHOPE Indivisible
CD17Indivisible
City Island Indivisible
Downtown East for Progress
East End Action Network
Empire State Indivisible
Fourth Universalist Society Justice Team
Indivisible Activate NYC
Indivisible Binghamton
Indivisible Brooklyn
Indivisible Cayuga
Indivisible Harlem
Indivisible Mohawk Valley
Indivisible Nassau County
Indivisible Nation BK
Indivisible New Rochelle
Indivisible NY24
Indivisible Rochester
Indivisible Upper East Side
Inwood Indivisible
Irvington Activists
Long Island Activists
Morningside Heights Resistance
New York Progressive Action Network
NY Indivisible
NY02 Indivisible
NYCD16 Indivisible
One Queens Indivisible
PEER: Progresssive East End Reformers
Progressive Action Alert
Progressive Schenectady
Putnam Progressives
Show Up Long Island
Staten Island Women Who March
SURJ ROCHESTER

To Do List Indivisible
Upper West Side Indivisible 97th Street
Upper West Side Action Group
West Harlem progressive Democratic Club