



85 Chestnut Street, Albany, New York 12210
Office Phone: 518-436-9319

www.nyscoc.org
E-mail: office@nyscoc.org

RESTORING FAITH IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York

Dear Governor Hochul:

As faith leaders across the state, we commend you for making a strong executive budget proposal which will help our state move forward. Your openness to suggestions and willingness to make changes is a welcome breath of fresh air and reflects well on your leadership as our Governor.

While we see many strengths in your proposed budget, we also note some significant short comings which have been ameliorated in the one house budget resolutions. Those budget resolutions reflect a view that true economic development is about prioritizing investment in public goods.

As you work with the legislature to close the gap between your budget and the one-house budget resolutions, we urge you to take a very hard look at what spending priorities will have a better economic impact and which will have less.

In this spirit, we cannot in good conscience support the misallocation of limited tax money to support a system that has been mired in corruption and doles out billions to big businesses and wealthy corporate interests when so many of our residents are suffering and finding it impossible to make ends meet. It's time for New York to begin to redefine "economic development" as improving the quality of life for regular New Yorkers and challenge traditional tax abatement and corporate subsidy style economic stimulus. The state needs to realize true economic development is about investments in "human infrastructure" like childcare, K-12 and higher education, the public workforce, home care and affordable housing. These investments benefit individuals, families, workers, businesses and the overall economic health of local communities and have a far greater return on investment (including an increase tax revenue in out years) than the benefits that will spring from tax abatements.

As you realign your priorities in the budget process, we urge you to lay the groundwork for a stronger economy in the future, by restoring the public's faith in the state's broken economic development system. New York State currently spends \$5 billion or more annually on dozens of programs designed to create economic activity and jobs that have highly questionable results.

Numerous studies have shown that these programs are costly, ineffective and lack basic transparency.

We urge you to support the most basic transparency and accountability measures outlined in the one-house budget resolutions as the first step in reforming a system that has been lacking oversight, accountability and transparency for decades. We urge you to restore the public's faith in state government by, at a minimum, supporting three proposals that would create greater transparency and accountability.

- **Establish a Database of Deals (S5711-A (Comrie)/A8325-A (Wallace)).** We spend billions every year on business subsidies, and unfortunately the public knows little about who receives these subsidies, the total dollar amount and whether or not the subsidies are creating jobs. Requiring Empire State Development (ESD) to create and maintain a Database of Deals will help the state assess whether or not business subsidies are an effective use of public funds. We believe this accountability must be mandated under state law, unlike the current Database of Economic Incentives which has limited data and can be removed at any time.
- **Restore the Comptroller's pre-audit authority in statute.** In 2019, the Governor and Comptroller established a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** that restored some of the Comptroller's pre-audit authority that had existed before 2011. Unfortunately, the MOU did not go far enough and can be revoked at any time with 10 day's notice. The state must fully restore the Comptroller's powers in statute before another Buffalo Billion-like scandal happens again.
- **Require an Independent Analysis of Empire State Development Programs.** Economic Development programs tend to be evaluated by the very agency operating the programs. This is like the fox guarding the hen house. The Senate has advanced language authorizing an independent analysis of economic development- related tax benefits, tax incentives and tax deductions.

There are a variety of resources which spell out our view on spending priorities for the state budget. Some include a recent **town hall** on the state budget co-sponsored by the New York State Council of Churches and New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness and the Council's **legislative ask for 2022 and seminars as part of its advocacy day**.

We thank you for bringing your Roman Catholic social teaching orientation to your policy making. Indeed, as faith leaders we find inspiration in the Roman Catholic Church's well-traveled positions on countering wealth and racial inequality, stressing the importance of unions in advocating for fair wages, and strengthening public policy which helps families stay together and care for children and the elderly.

While congregations and organizations are well accustomed to providing charity in our communities, this work is no substitute for New Deal-oriented solutions which can only come from the government. All of our traditions place a high emphasis on full financial transparency in our congregations and faith-based organizations we expect the same from the state government as they seek to be wise stewards of tax-payer dollars.

We wish you well as you formulate a sound state budget with the legislature. We urge you to have your faith fully inform your choices which have the best prospects of serving our people and ensuring a stronger and more just economic future for all New Yorkers.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

Mr. Gary VanKennen, President, New York State Council of Churches

Apostle Onlielove Chika Alston, Founder, Prophetic Whirlwind Ministries, New York City

Ms. Sylvia Avery, Treasurer, New London United Methodist Church, Oneida

The Reverend Laura Bachmann, Pastor, Gates Presbyterian Church, Rochester

Mr. Neil Berry, Leader, Open Arms, New York City

The Reverend Jennifer Boyd, Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Brewster

The Reverend Melissa Boyer, Pastor, Katonah United Methodist Church, Katonah

The Reverend Jane Brady-Close, Interim Rector, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Ghent

The Reverend Dr. Robert Brashear, Moderator, New York City Presbytery, New York

The Reverend Dr. Stephen Cady, Senior Minister, Asbury First United Methodist Church, Rochester

The Reverend D. Lowell Chilton, Interim Pastor, First Lutheran Church, Albany

Sister Faith Colligan, Social Justice Coordinator, Daughters of Charity, New York State, Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise, Albany

Ms. Marie Cook, Sisters of Mercy, Latham

Mr. Roger Cook, Convener, Interfaith Climate Justice Community, Western New York, Riverside Salem, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Grand Island

Ms. Marie Copeland, Lady of Charity, Delmar

The Reverend Jeffrey Courter, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Forest Hills

The Reverend Alan Dailey, Interim Executive Director, Greater Rochester Community of Churches, Rochester

Elder Daniel DeBrucker, Community Leader, Cross Street Community of NYC, Presbyterian Church, USA, Ridgewood

The Reverend Jennifer DeWeerth, United Church of Christ, Clinton

Chaplain Deborah Dickerson, Community Organizer, Picture the Homeless, Board Member, East Harlem Community Land Trust, Brooklyn

The Reverend John Flack, Pastor, Our Saviour's Atonement Lutheran Church, New York

The Reverend Leslie Foltz-Morrison, Minister and Member at Large, Presbytery of New York City

The Reverend Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso, Pastor, Emmanuel Presbyterian Reformed Church, Bronx

The Reverend Ivy Gauvin, Pastor, St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Bemus Point

The Reverend Dr. Richard Gilbert, Retired Unitarian Universalist Minister, Rochester

The Reverend Bruce Gillette, Pastor, First Presbyterian Union Church, Owego

The Reverend Dr. Charles B. Grimm, Chaplain, Rush United Methodist Church, Rush

The Most Reverend Dr. Anthony Green, Bishop, Catholic Apostolic Church in North America, Albany

Mr. Marc Greenberg, Executive Director, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing

Ms. Peace Queen, Johnson-Morton. Presiding Bishop, Christ Life Bible Church, Albany

The Reverend Alonzo Jordan, Pastor, Divine Alliance Ministries, Greenlawn

Mr. Robert Kaazmayer, Member of Executive Committee, New York State Council of Churches, The Religious Society of Friends, New York Yearly Meeting, Greenwich

The Reverend Jim Ketcham, Retired American Baptist Minister, Member of Executive Committee, New York State Council of Churches, Troy

The Reverend Charles King, CEO, Housing Works, Inc. Brooklyn

Ms. Karen Lapierre, First Lutheran Church, Albany

The Reverend Michael Livingston, Interim Senior Minister, The Riverside Church, New York

The Reverend Robert Long, Retired United Methodist Pastor, Relating to First United Methodist Church of Schenectady, Niskayuna

The Reverend Mark Lukens, Pastor, Bethany Congregational Church, East Rockaway

Sister Didi Madden, Promoter of Justice, Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration, Blauvelt

The Reverend Elizabeth Maxwell, Rector, Church of the Ascension, New York

Sister Paula Mayer, Director of Outreach, Historic Old St. John's, Utica

The Reverend Edward Meiser, Geneva Presbytery

Ms. Marianne Montero, Riverdale Presbyterian Church, Bronx

Bishop Lee Miller II, Bishop, Upstate New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Roni Minter, Founder, The Freedom Unshackled Coalition, Albany

Ms. Marianne Montero, Educator, Riverdale Presbyterian Church, Bronx

Mr. Jonathan Murdaugh, Pastor, Bethlehem Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Jamaica, Queens

Elder Chibueze Okorie, Minister, Church of Gethsemane, Presbyterian Church USA, Brooklyn

The Reverend John Paarlberg, Synod of Albany, Reformed Church in America, Loudonville

The Reverend Sharon Petgrave-Cundy, Pastor, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, New York

The Reverend Stephen Phelps, Presbytery of New York City, New York

The Reverend Steven Price, Pastor, Community Christian Church, Rochester

Minister Vanessa Pugh-Reefer, Congregational Church of South Hempstead, United Church of Christ

The Reverend Ted Pullano, Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Outreach, Penfield

The Reverend Daniel Ranney, Chaplain, Corrections, Granville

Bishop Dr. Raymond Rivera, Founder, Latino Pastoral Action Center, Bronx

The Reverend Dr. Victoria Jeanne Rollins, Rise Again Ministries, Episcopal Diocese of New York Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Force Co-Chair, New York

The Reverend Catherine Schuyler, Pastor, United Ministry of Delhi, Delhi

The Reverend Constance Seifert, Pastor, First United Methodist Church of Corning, Corning

Dr. Stephen Shafer, Warden, Trinity Episcopal Church, Saugerties, New York

The Reverend James Sheehan, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, Bronx

The Reverend Dr. Miriam Shelton, Retired, Presbytery of New York City, New York

Mrs. Barbara Shuck, Lay Preacher, Presbyterian Church, PCUSA, Whitesboro

The Reverend Dr. Welvin Smith, Chaplain, William-Morrison Farm, Canton

The Reverend Tanya Spencer, Pastor, Good Shepherd Community of Faith, Buffalo

Ms. Giselle Stanley, Chair, New York Annual Conference, White Plains

The Reverend Martha Stone, Associate Pastor, Henrietta United Church of Christ, Rochester

The Honorable Reverend Dr. Michael Strong, Chief Administrator, Families Deliverance Ministries Inc., Bronx

The Reverend Martha Swords-Horrell, Pastor, First United Methodist Church of Oneonta, Oneonta

Richard Tag, CEO, PPP Secular, New York

The Reverend Amaury Tañón-Santos, Executive Director, Schenectady Community Ministries, Schenectady

The Reverend Dr. Noel Vanek, Pastor, Community Church of the Pelhams, United Church of Christ, Pelhams

The Reverend Judy Van Kennen, Pastor, Emmanuel United Church of Christ, Massena

Sister Susan Wilcox, Justice Coordinator, Sisters of St. Joseph, Brentwood

The Reverend Dustin Wright, Senior Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Schenectady

Ms. Linda Yannone, Lay Leader, First Congregational Church of Ithaca, Ithaca

Ms. Mary Yelenick, UN-NGO, Main Representative, Pax Christi International, New York