



Statement of Principles for Fiscal and Social Responsibility During the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

Two million New Yorkers have already lost their jobs because of the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and layoffs of CUNY faculty and staff, schoolteachers, health care workers, and local government workers have already begun. New York State and City workers will be next on the chopping block.

Hundreds of thousands of additional job cuts will further devastate our economy and our ability to provide essential services in a time of need.

Working people, poor people and people of color have been hardest hit by the pandemic. They are getting sick and dying in disproportionate numbers, and layoffs have fallen most heavily on lower-wage and precarious workers. Meanwhile the wealth of billionaires and ultra-millionaires has been largely protected — and in many instances has grown significantly.

A new paper by the Public Accountability Initiative documents this growth in inequality in great detail:

“While pre-existing structural inequities have caused the disease and its side-effects to devastate New York’s working-class communities and communities of color, the state’s billionaires have increased their wealth substantially over the course of the pandemic.”

Even before COVID-19, New Yorkers urgently needed major increased public investment in health care, public education from pre-k through higher education, housing, mass transportation and many other fundamental services. That means new revenue raised by taxes on high wealth.

Washington has the responsibility and fiscal resources to aid the states to respond to the unprecedented huge costs and losses brought on by the pandemic. Whatever we do in New York must not be seen as implying that the federal government is in any way relieved of its responsibility. But we must be prepared to deal with federal failures to respond.

The overwhelming majority of New Yorkers will not be affected by our proposals to raise taxes on high wealth. Working and poor New Yorkers rely heavily on public services to help them survive day to day. They are over-taxed and under-served because our tax system does not demand enough from ultra-wealthy New Yorkers.

Times like these require shared sacrifice. In every economic downturn for the last 90 years, our state government has asked the wealthiest to pay more in taxes in order to meet the needs of all the people.

We must do so again, relying on these basic principles of fairness:

- New York State must do everything possible to minimize devastating budget cuts that will increase suffering, especially among poor and working people, place more burdens on strapped municipalities, and stall recovery.
- We must fight to maximize federal aid to fill New York’s gaping budget gap, but we must also be prepared to raise needed revenue from those who can afford to contribute to our recovery. To get through this crisis, we are going to need both massive federal aid and a significant contribution from New York’s most well-heeled residents.
- We must invest in recovery and come back stronger.

During the current crisis, New York’s leadership has confronted the pandemic with an approach rooted in honesty and compassion. As we deal with the economic crisis engendered by the pandemic -- and the great public needs that long preceded the pandemic -- these same values must come to the forefront. And we must remember our progressive roots as a state unafraid to do what’s right — even if that’s a politically tough choice — for its citizens.

Ultra-millionaires and billionaires should not be the only constituency held harmless in this crisis. We are all in this together, and sacrifice must be shared.

We the undersigned are clear: We will not allow state budget cuts without raising revenue from those who can most afford to pay more.

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 Assemblymember Jeffrion Aubry
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 Assemblymember Didi Barrett
 Assemblymember Charles Barron
 Assemblymember Michael R. Benedetto
 Assemblymember Harry B. Bronson
 Assemblymember David Buchwald
 Assemblymember Pat Burke
 Assemblymember Robert Carroll
 Assemblymember William Colton
 Assemblymember Catalina Cruz
 Assemblymember Taylor Darling
 Assemblymember Maritza Davila
 Assemblymember Michael DenDekker
 Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa
 Assemblymember Joe DeStefano
 Assemblymember Inez Dickens
 Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz
 Assemblymember Steve Englebright
 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein
 Assemblymember Pat Fahy
 Assemblymember Nathalia Fernandez

Assemblymember Mathylde Frontus
 Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick
 Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
 Assemblymember Aileen Gunther
 Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi
 Assemblymember Pamela Hunter
 Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman
 Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee
 Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre
 Assemblymember Ron Kim
 Assemblymember Charles David Lavine
 Assemblymember Joe Lentol
 Assemblymember Barbara Lifton
 Assemblymember Donna Lupardo
 Assemblymember John McDonald III
 Assemblymember Michael Miller
 Assemblymember Walter Mosley
 Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou
 Assemblymember Cathy Nolan
 Assemblymember Danny O’Donnell
 Assemblymember Felix Ortiz
 Assemblymember Steve Otis
 Assemblymember Amy Paulin
 Assemblymember Victor Pichardo

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Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal
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Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon
Assemblymember Aravella Simotas
Assemblymember Michaelle Solages
Assemblymember Phil Steck
Assemblymember Al Taylor
Assemblymember Fred Theile
Assemblymember Monica Wallace
Assemblymember David Weprin
Assemblymember Jaime R. Williams
Assemblymember Tremaine Wright
Assemblymember Kenneth Zebrwoski

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Senator Phil Boyle
Senator Neil Breslin
Senator John Brooks
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Senator Michael Gianaris
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Senator Brad Hoylman
Senator Robert Jackson
Senator Todd Kaminsky
Senator Anna Kaplan
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Senator Tim Kennedy
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Senator John Liu
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Senator Roxanne Persaud
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Senator Jose Serrano, Jr.
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Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
Senator Kevin Thomas

Unions and Organizations

Fiscal Policy Institute
Communications Workers of America, District One
New York State United Teachers
AFSCME District Council 37
Strong Economy for All
New York State Nurses Association
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
Public Employee Federation
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union
AFSCME Council 66
1199 SEIU
UAW Region 9A
United University Professions
AFL-CIO
32BJ SEIU
Local One I.A.T.S.E.