

January 22, 2013

Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo  
Honorable Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver  
Honorable Majority Coalition Leader Dean Skelos  
Honorable Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein  
Honorable Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Honorable Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb

Dear State Leaders:

New York State has the worst income inequality in the nation – a broader divide between the rich and the poor than anywhere else. We suffer unprecedented levels of homelessness and hunger throughout our state. In our largest cities, half of children live in poverty.

We can't accept these levels of poverty and inequality – it's ethically wrong, it's hurting our economy and it demands action for progress and change.

We urge you to evaluate this year's budget proposals through the lens of income inequality. And we urge you to eliminate proposals that make inequality worse, and boost those that ameliorate the crisis and broaden prosperity.

To cite a simple example: it's wrong to provide over a billion dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest families and biggest banks in our state at a time when so many New Yorkers are suffering. These funds could go to more productive uses that would benefit significantly more people who need help badly.

We can't afford a \$750-million-per-year estate tax break that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest 200 families in our state while millions suffer in poverty. It's not right to provide a \$350-million-per-year tax break to big banks at a time of record profits on Wall Street and record homelessness in New York City.

We believe is time to put the middle class over millionaires.

The past three budgets have implemented austerity measures that have made the daily lives of struggling families more difficult **and have disproportionately hurt our schools, our communities and many of our poorest residents.** We need more action from state government to boost paychecks, invest in children and families, and lift New Yorkers out of poverty. And we must ensure that any tax relief provided in this budget is targeted to the working and middle class families that need it the most.

We urge you to negotiate changes to the Executive Budget Proposal that meaningfully address New York's income inequality crisis, that lift families and children out of poverty, and that grow our economy from the bottom up.