

Citizens Budget Commission • Reinvent Albany • Citizens Union
Common Cause New York • Empire Center for Public Policy
New York Public Interest Research Group

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Temporary President and Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building
188 State Street, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building
188 State Street, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Watchdog groups thank legislative leaders for rejecting extraordinary powers in executive budget; urge them to hold firm

Dear Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Heastie:

We greatly appreciate your decision to omit several proposals in the Executive Budget that would grant the Governor extraordinary budget powers, especially sections 49 and 50 of Part X of the Public Protection and General Government bill. Our groups recommended these actions in a [February 20](#) letter and in prior years.

We write to urge you to hold firm on rejecting the extraordinary budget powers during negotiations and ensure that they are omitted from the enacted budget.

While many of these recommendations are repeated from prior years, our groups would like to highlight and reiterate the importance of rejecting a new extraordinary budget power added this year: a limitation on the scope of State Comptroller review of certain bond sales. It is important that the Comptroller has the authority to evaluate all State-supported bond sales on all essential and mandated criteria. Therefore, it is critical that the Executive's proposal be omitted from the enacted budget.

Specifically, we urge you to continue to:

- Reject the proposal to limit the scope of Comptroller review of certain bond transactions, as proposed in sections 49 and 50 of Part X of the Public Protection and General Government bill;

- Reject universal appropriation transfer and interchange authority within the State Operations bill;
- Reject the Governor’s permanent authority to issue up to \$4 billion in short-term revenue anticipation notes;
- Reject a \$1 billion transfer from the General Fund to the “Health Care Transformation Account,” unless its uses are more clearly defined in appropriations;
- Reject provisions added to individual appropriations that remove competitive bidding requirements and the Comptroller’s oversight; and
- Reduce the “Special Emergency Appropriation” from \$2 billion to \$1 billion.

Most of these proposals were in previous Executive Budgets, and some were originally enacted in the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, the broad spending, budget management, and borrowing authorities gave the Governor the needed authority and flexibility to manage a historic public health emergency and dire fiscal situation.

Nearly four years later, the situation is vastly different. These extraordinary powers are no longer necessary, and we agree with you that the Governor should not have the unchecked authority to transfer, spend, or issue debt backed by public dollars.

We strongly support your opposition to these extraordinary budget powers and thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Rein
 President
 Citizens Budget Commission

John Kaehny
 Executive Director
 Reinvent Albany

Betsy Gotbaum
 Executive Director
 Citizens Union

Blair Horner
 Executive Director
 New York Public Interest Research Group

Tim Hofer
 President & CEO
 Empire Center for Public Policy

Susan Lerner
 Executive Director
 Common Cause New York

cc:

Blake Washington, Director of the New York State Division of the Budget
 Senator Liz Krueger, Chair of the Senate Finance Committee
 Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee