



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2026



Who We Are

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) proudly represents employees that work for the state, local governments, school districts, public authorities, the private sector, and home-based child care providers. Our 2026 Legislative Agenda reflects the diverse voices of more than 200,000 hardworking members united by a common goal: a better life and a secure future.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Public Services & Workforce3

- Reform Tiers 5 & 6
- Improve the Civil Service System
- Increase Funding to State Agencies
- Increase State Support for Local Governments

Healthcare.....4

- Protect the Healthcare System from Federal Cuts
- Invest in State Mental Healthcare Capacity
- Support People with Developmental Disabilities

Public Protection.....5

- Improve Safety in OMH OPWDD, and OCFS Facilities
- Protect Staff and Incarcerated Individuals in DOCCS Facilities
- Improve Benefits for Injured Probation Officers
- Strengthen 911 Operator & Dispatcher Systems
- Improve Pensions for Court System Employees

Transportation.....7

- Keep Highway Workers Safe
- Protect DMV Employees from Assault

Education.....8

- Discipline Rights for Part-Time Teaching Assistants
- Invest in SUNY State-Operated Campuses
- Increase State Support for Community Colleges

Social Services.....9

- Protect Social Services Caseworkers
- Reduce Social Services Caseloads
- Preserve Merit & Fitness in SNAP and Medicaid

Child Care.....11

- Work Towards Universal Child Care
- Support Home-Based Child Care Providers

Retirees.....11

- Protect Public Sector Employees in Retirement

Public Services & Workforce

Reform Tiers 5 & 6

In the past, people entered the public sector knowing that they would make less money than their private sector counterparts but would receive a pension that would ensure adequate financial resources in retirement. With the enactment of Tiers 5 & 6, pensions are no longer a selling point for entering the public sector, as new employees must work longer and pay more for a smaller benefit at retirement.

CSEA supports efforts to equalize Tier 5 and 6 pensions with Tier 4.

Improve the Civil Service System

New York's civil service system is the backbone of a fair and effective public workforce. By ensuring that hiring and promotions are based on merit and fitness, the system protects against favoritism and builds public trust. At the same time, modernizing the way Civil Service operates is essential to meet today's challenges: streamlining hiring, improving access to exams, and reducing hiring delays that discourage qualified candidates from entering the public sector. The NY HELPS Program has proven to be a critical short-term tool to increase recruitment and retention for state and local governments, but more must be done to bolster and sustain the public sector workforce over the long-term.

CSEA supports the Department of Civil Service's initiative to transform the civil service merit system by implementing vacancy-based online training and experience examinations for open-competitive positions.

Increase Funding to State Agencies

New Yorkers rely on state agencies to provide critical services, from mental health programs to support for people with developmental disabilities. Chronic underfunding and low staffing levels make it difficult for residents to access the programs and services they need in a timely manner.

In 2024, state agency overtime costs increased by 10.2%, to \$1.3 billion, while the number of overtime hours rose by 7.8%, 1.8 million hours more than the previous year. Despite a 3.7% increase in the state workforce, agencies continue to rely heavily on overtime to meet service demands, indicating persistent staffing shortages and inefficiencies.

CSEA supports increased funding for state agencies so they can fully deliver the programs and services that residents expect and deserve.

Increase State Support for Local Governments

Local governments deliver essential services that keep communities safe, healthy, and functioning. From maintaining roads and bridges to administering social services and sanitation, these services directly impact the quality of life for working families across New York State. However, chronic underfunding and staffing challenges have strained local operations. Increased state investment is needed to ensure local governments have the resources and staffing to meet community needs.

CSEA supports increased state investment in local governments, including:

- Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM).
- Infrastructure funding for the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), Extreme Winter Recovery Program, Marchiselli Program, and State Touring Routes.
- Funding to assist Local Social Services Districts to improve recruitment and retention of staff.
- Funding for local probation departments to recruit and retain staff.
- Investments in local libraries to enhance safety and expand access to materials.

Healthcare

Protect the Healthcare System from Federal Cuts

Deep federal cuts to Medicaid, the Essential Plan, and safety-net hospitals risks the sustainability and accessibility of New York's healthcare system. These cuts could result in the loss of more than 200,000 jobs, shutter up to 70 hospitals, and leave 1.5 million New Yorkers uninsured.

CSEA supports additional state investment to preserve public hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare facilities, especially public safety-net facilities.

Invest in State Mental Healthcare Capacity

Between April 2014 and May 2025, the total number of inpatient psychiatric beds statewide fell by more than 11 percent. At the same time, the demand for mental health services is increasing. Recent estimates indicate that 21.1 percent of adult New Yorkers have a mental illness. This disparity has led to limited access to care and increased crises stemming from untreated mental illness.

CSEA supports restoring and expanding OMH's mental health bed capacity so New Yorkers of all ages can access timely and effective treatment in their communities.

Support People with Developmental Disabilities

New Yorkers with developmental disabilities deserve consistent, high-quality care and services that allow them to live with dignity and independence. Yet service gaps, workforce shortages, and abrupt changes in care settings create instability for individuals and families who rely on this support every day.

CSEA supports efforts to ensure sufficient staffing and safeguard continuity of care within the system so that people with developmental disabilities have reliable access to the services they need, including:

- Increased funding to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to improve recruitment and retention of staff.
- A 4% targeted inflationary increase to non-profit OPWDD facilities, including a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for direct care workers.
- **A.9400 (Santabarbara):** Makes permanent the requirement for OPWDD to give a 90-day notice of any closure or transfer of a state operated individualized residential alternative (See: Part B of Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2024).
- **A.9399 (Santabarbara):** Extends authorization for the OPWDD Care Demonstration Program, authorizing OPWDD to provide community based programs and services to clients (See: Part B of Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2024).

Public Protection

Improve Safety in OMH, OPWDD, and OCFS Facilities

The increased presence of weapons and other contraband in facilities operated by the Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has led to an increase in the number of assaults and violent incidents against staff, clients, patients and residents.

CSEA supports efforts to improve safety in these facilities, including S.8054 (Baskin) / A.8232 (Paulin): Expands the use of body scanners for use in facilities operated by OMH, OPWDD, and OCFS in the same manner and to the same extent as is currently authorized for facilities operated by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).

Protect Staff and Incarcerated Individuals in DOCCS Facilities

Violence in facilities operated by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) has risen significantly. Between 2019 and 2024, there has been a 113% increase in assaults between incarcerated individuals and an 86% increase in assaults on staff. There were 2,069 assaults on staff and 2,980 assaults on incarcerated individuals in 2024. More must be done to ensure that facilities are safe for incarcerated individuals, staff, and the visiting public.

CSEA supports efforts to improve safety in DOCCS facilities, including :

- Require all DOCCS staff to be screened upon entry to any facility.
- Clarify that sexual harassment and lewd conduct are behaviors eligible for placement in segregated confinement.
- Add a new offense for conduct consistent with aggravated harassment of an employee.

Improve Benefits for Injured Probation Officers

County probation officers face a high risk of assault and other injuries. They conduct home visits and meet one-on-one with individuals with histories of violence. However, unlike other law enforcement personnel, probation officers are not provided the same benefits when they are injured.

CSEA supports A.2535 (Paulin): To provide counties with the **option** to provide full pay and medical coverage to injured probation officers.

Strengthen 911 & Emergency Dispatch Systems

911 operators and other emergency dispatchers are first responders who work in extremely fast-paced, stressful environments. The existing retirement plan makes it difficult to recruit and retain employees, as the cumulative stress and trauma of the job take a significant toll on their well-being. In fact, public safety telecommunicators are about 15 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. While other first responders, like police officers and firefighters, can retire after 20 years of service, emergency dispatchers in Tier 6 are required to work until they are 63 or face steep benefit reductions.

CSEA supports S.7635 (Ryan) / A.9162 (Pheffer Amato): To provide municipalities with the **option** to offer a 25-year retirement plan for 911 operators and emergency dispatchers.

Improve Pensions for Court System Employees

Uniformed court officers and peace officers employed by the state's court system play a critical role in keeping facilities safe for judges, court staff, attorneys, defendants, and the general public. These employees face similar stressors as other law enforcement personnel, but do not receive a comparable pension, which makes it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff.

CSEA supports efforts to improve retirement benefits for uniformed court officers and peace officers. In the near term, CSEA supports providing these officers with the ability to retire upon attaining age 55 with 30 years of creditable service (**see S.8207 of 2024**). Over the long term, CSEA supports **S.4581 (Jackson) / A.5767 (Pheffer Amato)**: To provide these officers with a 25-year retirement plan to align with the benefits provided to other law enforcement personnel.

Transportation

Keep Highway Workers Safe

Every day, the employees who maintain our state's roads, bridges, and highways put their lives on the line. Tragically, in 2024, two State Thruway Authority employees, including CSEA member Stephen Ebling, were struck and killed on the job. In another harrowing incident caught on a dashboard camera, a CSEA-represented Department of Transportation (DOT) employee was nearly killed when a box truck failed to move over for a maintenance crew. These cases underscore the ever-present risks faced by highway workers who are just trying to do their jobs.

CSEA supports efforts to better protect highway workers by preventing, deterring, and penalizing reckless driving, including:

- Expand the Work Zone Camera Program to include non-controlled highway work zones.
- Provide \$500,000 in additional funding for DOT's Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Program, which pays for maintenance and traffic protection services of the Division of State Police.
- **S.4649 (Cooney) / A.4016 (Magnarelli)**: Increases penalties on drivers who fail to abide by the state's Move Over Law.
- **S.4647 (Cooney) / A.4015 (Magnarelli)**: Increases penalties for speeding in a work zone.
- **S.4646 (Cooney) / A.4011 (Magnarelli)**: Suspends the registrations of vehicles cited five or more times by a work zone speed camera within an 18-month period.
- **A.8978 (Kay)**: Directs the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to make failure to move over a five point violation.

Protect DMV Employees from Assault

In a survey of New York Motor Vehicle License Examiners, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) employees who are responsible for assessing license applicants ability to operate a motor vehicle or tractor trailer, more than 50 percent of respondents said they have experienced workplace violence, including instances of being kidnapped, slapped, punched, and threatened with physical violence.

CSEA supports efforts to better protect DMV employees by deterring violent behaviors, including S.8184 (Cooney) / A.8854 (Dinowitz): Increases criminal penalties for assaulting Motor Vehicle License Examiners and Motor Vehicle Representatives, as well as other transportation workers.

Education

Discipline Rights for Part-Time Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants play a vital role in supporting both educators and students by helping maintain an effective learning environment. Their work ensures that classrooms run smoothly and efficiently. However, while other employees in the education field are entitled to disciplinary rights, part-time teaching assistants have no statutory rights to such process.

CSEA supports legislation to grant part-time teaching assistants in public schools and BOCES similar due process rights as other public sector employees.

Invest in SUNY State-Operated Campuses

Students at SUNY's state-operated campuses deserve high-quality programs, strong faculty and staff support, and the resources necessary to succeed. Yet budget deficits at many campuses have forced cuts to programs and staff, undermining educational opportunities and the student experience. In addition, decades of deferred maintenance have left the system with a \$9 billion maintenance backlog. Aging infrastructure threatens not only the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff but also the ability of campuses to operate efficiently and sustainably.

CSEA supports increased funding for SUNY State-Operated Campuses, including:

- Increased operational funding to ensure that all 29 SUNY state-operated campuses remain open, accessible, and able to provide the educational resources students need to thrive.
- Increased capital funding to address SUNY's \$9B system-wide critical maintenance backlog.

Increase State Support for Community Colleges

New York’s community colleges serve nearly half of State University of New York’s undergraduate students, many of whom are low-income and from underrepresented backgrounds. Despite their critical role in the state’s education system, these colleges have been historically underfunded compared to their four-year counterparts. As a result, in 2024, nearly one-third of SUNY’s Community Colleges faced accreditation questions over their financial viability.

CSEA supports increased funding for SUNY Community Colleges, including:

- Maintain the funding floor for community colleges at 100% of prior year funding to prevent losses in formula aid due to enrollment declines.
- Provide additional state support for contractual salary and benefit increases for faculty and staff.
- Increase operating support for high need, high cost programs like nursing, STEM, and advanced manufacturing.

Social Services

Protect Social Services Caseworkers

Local Social Service District caseworkers face significant risks of violence due to the nature of their job. These workers frequently operate independently without immediate backup. They are often required to conduct home visits alone, where clients may react aggressively to investigations. In a study of recently hired Child Protective Services (CPS) workers, 75% experienced verbal abuse and 37% experienced threats of violence in their first six months on the job. CPS workers face a non-fatal workplace injury rate five times the rate of all U.S. workers.

CSEA supports efforts to improve safety for employees of local social services districts, including:

- **S.6987 (Harckham) / A.7833 (Levenberg):** Requires local social services districts to provide ‘panic buttons’ to social workers who interact with clients in external settings.
- **S.6986 (Harckham) / A.7831 (Levenberg):** Increases criminal penalties for assaulting and threatening a CPS worker.

Reduce Social Services Caseloads

When caseloads are high, the ability of caseworkers to respond quickly and provide timely interventions is severely compromised, leading to increased risks of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment. High caseloads also result in stress and burnout, driving experienced workers out of the field. This leaves fewer, less experienced workers to handle more complex cases, further threatening the well-being of those in need.

To align with national standards and best practices, CSEA supports legislation to limit caseloads for Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS), preventative services, and foster care caseworkers:

- **S.7318 (Brisport) / A.456 (Hevesi):** Caps caseloads for CPS to no more than two initial investigations per week, per caseworker.
- **S.2396 (Persaud) / A.4035 (Eachus):** Caps caseloads for APS to no more than 30 total cases per caseworker.
- **A.3553 (Burke):** Caps caseloads for preventative services to no more than 12 families per caseworker.
- **S.6753 (Brisport) / A.7596 (Rivera):** Caps caseloads for foster care at no more than 16 cases per caseworker.

Preserve Merit & Fitness in SNAP and Medicaid

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid are lifelines for millions of New Yorkers, ensuring access to food and health care for families in need. These programs are currently administered by state and local employees hired through merit and fitness, which ensures accountability, fairness, and high standards of service.

Potential federal changes could allow states to outsource administration of these programs to private for-profit entities, undermining public oversight and the quality of services residents depend on.

CSEA supports state legislation to protect the public administration of SNAP and Medicaid, which will preserve merit-based hiring, protect program integrity, and ensure that qualified, experienced public employees continue delivering these critical services.

Child Care

Work Towards Universal Child Care

Thousands of families across New York remain unable to access the child care they need. Limited capacity and chronic underfunding have left too many eligible families without support.

CSEA supports efforts that advance the state towards universal child care, where every child and family can access high-quality, free child care that meets their care needs.

Support Home-Based Child Care Providers

Home-based childcare providers play a critical role in meeting the needs of working families, especially in communities where access to center-based care is limited. If universal child care is to be a reality, the number of these providers needs to be increased and better supported. These providers deserve fair treatment, financial stability, and clear, supportive policies that make it easier to open and sustain their programs.

CSEA supports efforts to reduce barriers for home-based childcare providers, including:

- Align supervision requirements for infants in home-based settings with what is already required in childcare centers (**See: S.4929 (Brouk) / A.4003 (Clark) of 2025**).
- **S.2022 (Cooney) / A.1279 (Clark)**: Exempts from income any funding from a childcare stabilization grant, childcare desert funding, or other non-recurring funding issued by OCFS.
- **S.7949 (Ryan) / A.6078 (Hunter)**: Provides a 90-day window for child care providers to make facility changes or accommodations necessary for licensure without having to restart the licensing process.

Retirees

Protect Public Sector Employees in Retirement

With the price of prescription drugs, groceries, and other everyday items constantly on the rise, retirees are already being stretched to their limits. For those living on a fixed income, even small changes in out-of-pocket healthcare costs can have a substantial impact on their budgets and overall well-being. Protecting retirement security is essential to ensuring that public employees can live with dignity after a lifetime of service.

CSEA supports efforts to strengthen and preserve Social Security, Medicare, retirement benefits, and will continue to oppose proposals that undermine the economic security of retirees.

