

STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF ONONDAGA LEGISLATURE

In the Matter of the  
2020 Proposed Budget

2020 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING, conducted at the  
Onondaga County Court House, Legislative  
Chambers, 401 Montgomery street, Syracuse, New  
York before JOHN F. DRURY, CSR, Notary Public in  
and for the State of New York, on October 3, 2019,  
at 6:00 p.m.

County Legislature Appearances:

(12) LEGISLATURE CHAIRMAN DAVID H. KNAPP  
(5) WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE CHAIR: DEBRA J. CODY

1st District BRIAN F. MAY  
2nd District JAMES J. ROWLEY  
3rd District TIM BURTIS  
4th District JUDITH TASSONE  
6th District JULIE ABBOTT-KENAN  
7th District THOMAS C. BUCKEL, JR.  
8th District CHRISTOPHER J. RYAN  
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10th District KEVIN A. HOLMQUIST  
11th District JOHN D. McBRIDE  
13th District KEN BUSH, JR.  
14th District CASEY E. JORDAN  
15th District MILES M. BOTTRILL  
16th District MONICA WILLIAMS  
17th District LINDA R. ERVIN

Legislative Clerk: Deborah L. Maturo

John F. Drury, CSR, RPR  
Court Reporter  
Syracuse, NY 471-7397

Chair

**WAYS & MEANS CHAIR MS. CODY:** Good

evening. I'd like to call to order the  
Ways and Means Committee public hearing  
on the proposed 2020 budget. We have an  
exit in the back, two exits in the  
front. I would ask that everyone please  
silence their cellphones if you haven't  
already.

Mr. Chairman Knapp, do you have any  
preliminary comments that you would like  
to make?

**LEGS CHAIR KNAPP:** Thank you.

Appreciate everyone's attendance  
tonight. You know it's a long process,  
very intense process, we've got a  
\$1.3 billion budget to go over. Everyone  
was working very very hard on it. So I  
want to recognize our clerk, Debbie  
Maturo and her entire staff for all  
their hard work during the past three  
weeks or so. And of course all the  
legislators too, who kind of put their  
lives on hold for a time to get this  
done. So appreciate everybody.

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Chair

Obviously you know tonight is about  
the budget and you know comments about  
that are obviously welcome, and  
recommendations. We're here to listen.  
Like I said, it's not a time for  
politics, that will be very shortly. So  
anyway, with that, thank you, Madam  
Chairperson.

**WAYS & MEANS CHAIR CODY:** Thank you.  
Any other legislator wish to comment?

**LEGISLATOR ERVIN:** On behalf of the  
whole staff, I would like to thank  
Debbie and Darcee too, they worked  
really hard with all going on. So I  
thank you anyway.

**WAYS & MEANS CHAIR CODY:** Absolutely,  
Darcee has done a great job, the whole  
staff here, and had great participation  
in the budget by all Legislators.

**LEGS CHAIR KNAPP:** Darcee, we're all  
thanking you.

**CHAIR CODY:** We had great  
participation and cooperation, also  
spent most of the time together, which

Knoblock

was nice. So moving on. I will point out that if you do have any comments that you wish to make, if you wish to speak, please sign in at the front of the chambers. If you have a printed hard copy of your comments, please provide them to our clerk, Deb Maturo.

The commentary will begin. First up is Peter Knoblock. And on deck will be Laurie Black.

**PETER KNOBLOCK:** Good evening. My name is Peter Knoblock. I've been a resident of Syracuse for close to 60 years. How that happened, that's a topic for another time.

I'm here to thank you for your support for our children in our city and county. The county already supports clinics in public schools and Syracuse public schools. We have an opportunity to really try to put the pieces together. So I'm really here to support the budget item for Early Childhood strategies. We have the Early Childhood

Black

are ready to learn in Onondaga County. And unfortunately as I'm sure you do know, many kids are not ready for school ready to learn. And by 3rd grade they are not reading at grade level. So across Onondaga County, only 40 percent are reading at grade level. And that's 40 percent, in the city it's 22 percent. State-wide it's 52 percent. So for Onondaga County to be that far below the state-wide average is very disappointing. But that just doesn't happen in 3rd grade, it happens much earlier than at 3rd grade, it happens starting at birth.

For our community to really address this issue we're going to have to address it significantly in early childhood. And we're so grateful that the County Executive has seen this early childhood investment as part of the strategy to address poverty. But it's bigger than poverty to address educational performance in Onondaga

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Alliance, we have Imagination Library, we have a number of groups that are trying to address our little short persons. And it's really a no brainer when it comes to thinking about prevention. So thank you for your support and help, and I hope you approve it. Thank you.

**CHAIR CODY:** Thank you. And on deck is Misse Ross.

**LAURIE BLACK:** Good evening. I apologize for my voice. I do have a cold or I'm getting off one. Thank you for having this public testimony tonight. I'm here representing the Early Childhood Alliance and the Early Childhood Alliance Business Council. I'm the Director of the Early Childhood Alliance of Onondaga.

For those of you not familiar, this is a coalition of partners, and Onondaga County is a significant partner in this work. And our overall goal is that all children actually from kindergarten on

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County community.

So across the country we truly understand that the five year life is the foundation for all that comes later. The research is in, there is no more debate. Innovative communities across the country, we can't wait for the federal government and the states.

Federal spending is about 3 percent of their education on early childhood. The state is under-investing as well.

The only way to truly transform this community is taking local dollars and investing in their children. We have a Business Council that is behind us and they do see the connection between the first years of life and the workforce. So we're thankful for the Business Council for their advocacy for this work.

Overall the big picture is that the County Executive is investing in a vision of \$1.5 million which will be transformative for our community. We

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1 Ross  
2 will see results because of this  
3 investment. And we're urging the  
4 Legislature to stand behind the County  
5 Executive in this investment. And  
6 really help us to make sure all children  
7 in Onondaga County can be successful in  
8 their school system. So thank you for  
9 allowing me to testify, and I hope you  
10 will support these investments. Thank  
11 you, very much.  
12 **CHAIR CODY:** Thank you, very much. I  
13 did forget to say, your comments are for  
14 three minutes. We're doing well on that.  
15 Misse Ross up next, and on deck is Lori  
16 Schakow.  
17 **MISSE ROSS:** Good evening. I want  
18 to thank the County for its commitment  
19 to ending childhood lead exposure. I'm  
20 overjoyed that we have the most money  
21 available for remediation that we have  
22 ever had. I do want to warn you that  
23 remediation funds alone will not solve  
24 the problem.  
25 We need to make sure that every

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1 Ross  
2 child is being tested. We also need to  
3 ensure that we have enough staff to test  
4 the properties where these children  
5 reside, in a timely fashion.  
6 Currently there are only three lead  
7 inspectors in Onondaga County. 600 to  
8 700 children in our community are  
9 exposed to lead each year. Three lead  
10 inspectors is just not enough to handle  
11 the volume of inspections. The shortage  
12 of lead inspectors creates a situation  
13 where children are left in continued  
14 exposure for far too long. It takes  
15 time for the initial inspection, then  
16 more time for the landlord to remediate,  
17 then another inspection must be done.  
18 Many times the property fails again,  
19 which results in more time for  
20 remediation and retesting, until it  
21 passes. All the while these children  
22 are living surrounded by poison.  
23 We cannot have children residing in  
24 the home for six months, eight months, a  
25 year, waiting for testing and

11

1 Ross  
2 remediation to happen. The longer the  
3 child is exposed to lead the more  
4 harmful the effects are. We need to  
5 make sure these cases are resolved  
6 quickly. And if that is not possible,  
7 we need to relocate these families.  
8 The WIC program has provided testing  
9 in our community for decades. That has  
10 stopped as of July 1st, 2019. This  
11 testing was crucial in catching the  
12 poison of children who have fallen  
13 through the cracks in our healthcare  
14 system otherwise.  
15 I beg that you find a way to restart  
16 the lead testing and WIC immediately. I  
17 am unable to ascertain whether this  
18 decision came from the state or the  
19 county level. I am begging you to  
20 partner with our state government on  
21 this issue, as you have with our city  
22 and federal government.  
23 I'm fearful that without the WIC  
24 testing the remediation funding will not  
25 make it to our most severely impacted

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1 Ross  
2 neighborhoods.  
3 I also beg you to find a way to  
4 increase the number of lead inspectors  
5 in our community. Three people cannot  
6 handle the amount of testing a problem  
7 this large requires. Onondaga County  
8 manages the majority of the different  
9 agencies that are involved when a child  
10 is exposed to lead. Many of those  
11 agencies are funded by state and federal  
12 government. We need these agencies to  
13 reach to our state and federal  
14 representatives if programs are not  
15 working or if changes are made to them  
16 that will negatively impact our  
17 community.  
18 We need everyone working together on  
19 this. This problem has plagued our  
20 community for decades. It has deeply  
21 contributed to the violence in our  
22 streets, the crowding in our jails, the  
23 low graduation rates and poverty in our  
24 community. Whether you think this  
25 impact you or not, it does. The impact



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1 Schakow  
2 ripples out.  
3 Let's make the most of this  
4 opportunity with this remediation money  
5 and attack this problem from all angles.  
6 Let us please not be talking about this  
7 issue in another four years. Thank you.  
8 **CHAIR CODY:** Thank you. Lori Schakow.  
9 **LORI SCHAKOW:** Good evening. I'm  
10 Lori Schakow, the Executive Director for  
11 Childhood Solutions and a partner with  
12 Laurie Black on the Early Childhood  
13 Alliance.  
14 I want to thank the Ways and Means  
15 Committee in taking a bold step to  
16 transform early childhood education in  
17 Onondaga County. You should have all  
18 received, and hopefully read the copy of  
19 the report we partnered on. It's filled  
20 with a lot of detail that Laurie  
21 mentioned. I hope you all read it. It  
22 explains not only the strategies but why  
23 early childhood is so important, both  
24 for children's development and the  
25 community's economic development.

14

1 Schakow  
2 But what you won't find in the  
3 report that is that voters in New York  
4 State raise childhood education and  
5 childcare as a top tier priority. And  
6 I'm going to read from, this is very  
7 brief, from the report.  
8 "So global strategy groups in  
9 partnership with raising New York,  
10 conducted an online survey between July  
11 8th to 14th, 2019, among 1,208 likely  
12 2020 voters in New York State. The  
13 survey found that voters across New York  
14 State are overwhelmingly supportive of  
15 in investing more public funds to ensure  
16 that infants in poverty are helped in  
17 the development of tracking at birth and  
18 throughout early childhood.  
19 When asked for ranking a list of  
20 issues, including education and  
21 childcare, access to affordable  
22 healthcare, eradicating poverty and  
23 homelessness, reducing taxes,  
24 eliminating wasteful government  
25 spending, and protecting the environment

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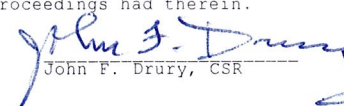
1 Schakow  
2 and climate change. Only healthcare  
3 surpassed education and childcare as a  
4 top priority."  
5 So please let voters know that you  
6 heard them and were listening, and make  
7 Onondaga County a leader in the state  
8 and in the nation by investing in early  
9 childhood. Thank you.  
10 **MS. CODY:** Thank you. Is there  
11 anyone else that wishes to speak  
12 tonight? Are there any comments from  
13 our Legislators? Okay, the comment  
14 period is now closed. Again, thank you  
15 everyone for your work during the budget  
16 process, for their passion and the  
17 issues they care about. And there if  
18 there is no further speakers wishing to  
19 be heard I declare the public hearing  
20 closed. Thank you.  
21 [Conclusion of Public Hearing].  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that I am a  
Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary  
Public in and for the State of New York,  
that I attended and reported the above  
entitled proceedings, that I have  
compared the foregoing with my original  
minutes taken therein and that it is a  
true and correct transcript thereof and  
all of the proceedings had therein.

  
John F. Drury, CSR

Dated: October 8, 2019