

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Guy Molyneux and Geoff Garin
DATE: April 18, 2023
RE: NY voters say budget should fund safety net hospitals and raise Medicaid payment rates

On behalf of the Healthcare Education Project, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey examining New York voters’ priorities for the state budget being negotiated by Governor Hochul and the legislature. We interviewed 809 registered voters statewide from April 13 to 15, 2023, and the survey’s confidence interval is ±3.5 percentage points. This memo reviews the survey’s key findings.

Ensuring that New Yorkers have access to affordable, quality healthcare is voters’ top priority for the budget legislation being negotiated by the governor and legislature, ahead of bail reform and other issues.

- Six in seven voters (87%) across the state say that ensuring access to affordable, quality healthcare should be a high priority for state policymakers, including 59% who say it’s a very high priority. Access to affordable healthcare is rated a high priority by more New Yorkers than every other budget goal we measured.
- When voters select their top budget goals, access to affordable healthcare again ranks first, even ahead of other key potential elements of a budget agreement, such as giving judges more discretion to keep criminal suspects in jail, support for law enforcement, and affordable housing.

Voters’ Top Budget Priorities

51%	Ensure access to affordable, quality healthcare for all New Yorkers
41%	Increase support for police and law enforcement
38%	Give judges more discretion to keep people facing criminal charges in jail before trial
37%	Build more affordable housing and protect tenants’ rights
33%	Raise the state minimum wage

- By 60% to 40%, New York voters say specifically that ensuring access to affordable healthcare for all New Yorkers is a higher priority than changing bail laws to allow judges more discretion to keep people facing criminal charges in jail. NY Democrats say healthcare is the higher priority by a decisive 69% to 31%.
- Only a fifth (21%) of voters want to see the entire budget surplus placed in the state’s rainy day fund, while fully 79% believe a portion of the surplus should be used to increase funding for healthcare.

Voters across the state overwhelmingly support the legislature’s proposed increase in Medicaid reimbursements to healthcare providers. Many lose confidence in Governor Hochul when they learn she opposes the increase.

- By 77% to 23%, voters favor the legislature’s proposal to raise Medicaid payment rates so that they cover a larger share of the actual cost of patient care provided by doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes. The proposal is embraced by 65% of Republicans, 83% of Democrats, and 78% of unaffiliated voters.
- In contrast, the Governor’s opposition to raising Medicaid payment rates gives them less confidence rather than more confidence in her budget priorities by an 18-point margin (47% to 29%).
- Voters say by 50% to 12% that they would be more likely to vote for Hochul in the next gubernatorial election if she were to support increasing Medicaid reimbursements by 10%.

On the issue of funding safety net hospitals, New Yorkers strongly support the legislature’s proposed restoration of \$1.2 billion in funding but reject Governor Hochul’s proposed cuts.

- Fully 85% of voters statewide—including 93% of Democrats—favor restoring \$1.2 billion in funding to the state’s safety net hospitals.
- In contrast, the Governor’s call to cut \$700 million in funding for safety net hospitals meets with a negative response, with 61% of voters (including 59% of Democrats) saying this reduces their confidence in Hochul and just 18% saying it increases their confidence.

Voters respond negatively to a number of Governor Hochul’s other healthcare proposals.

- Seventy-seven percent (77%) say that Governor Hochul’s position of reducing the hourly wage of home care workers by \$4.09 per hour gives them less confidence in her. In contrast, 86% voice support for the legislature’s proposed increase in wages for home care workers to \$21 per hour.
- Fully 64% of New Yorkers feel less confident in Hochul when they learn she wants to end prescription drug discounts for safety net hospitals (and just 19% feel more confident). In comparison, 87% favor the legislature’s position of continuing the prescription discounts.
- Three in five voters (62%) say that Hochul’s proposed cuts to funding for charity care at hospitals lowers their confidence in her (only 17% say more confidence).