



www.balconynewyork.com

BALCONY

MARCH 2015

REPORT



Dear **BALCONY** members and friends,

It has been a busy new year!

❖ **BALCONY** hosted and sponsored several informative and networking events including a February forum on affordable housing featuring **NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development Commissioner Vicki Been** and **NYS Homes and Community Renewal/CEO Darryl Towns** and **NYC Public Advocate Letitia James**.

❖ **Governor Andrew Cuomo** introduced an ambitious and controversial state budget that seeks sweeping changes on everything from education to property taxes and women's rights.

❖ **President Barack Obama** released the FY 2016 budget, which was received with significant resistance by the new majority GOP Congress. The House and Senate's recent budget proposals seek to roll back or eliminate the Affordable Care Act and reduce the social safety net protections of food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid.

With so much having transpired, we wanted to take this opportunity to update you on some of **BALCONY's** recent activities and initiatives and our positions on current issues and goals for 2015.

BALCONY is, first and foremost, an organization dedicated to finding common ground between business and labor on the most important and critical public policy questions facing our state in the interest of achieving common sense solutions.

In that spirit we present the following report with the intent of educating our members and friends on **BALCONY's** current positions.

We look forward to working with all of you over the course of the year, and thank you for your participation in our ongoing mission to find common ground between business and labor to the benefit of the state of New York.

With warm regards,

Alan Lubin
Founder, BALCONY

and

Lou Gordon
Director, BALCONY

IN THIS REPORT

[New York Needs a Viable Minimum Wage](#)

[Affordable Housing in New York City and State](#)

[New York Needs Major Investment in Infrastructure](#)

[Education: A Battle for New York's Students, Schools and Teachers](#)

[Protecting Women's Rights](#)

[Family Leave Act in New York State](#)

[Saving the Social Safety Net](#)

[Health Care](#)

[Statements from BALCONY Members on Current Issues](#)

NEW YORK NEEDS A VIABLE MINIMUM WAGE



"Raising the minimum wage in New York State to \$10.50/hour and \$11.50/hour in New York City makes good business sense."

-- Cynthia DiBartolo, BALCONY Executive Board Member, Chairman of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, and CEO of Tigress Financial Partners

BALCONY, representing both business and labor advocates across New York State, has long been committed to raising the minimum wage, which, at its current level, leaves millions of New Yorkers in poverty, or at best, struggling just to make ends meet. In 2012, after seeking guidance from both business and labor, **BALCONY** endorsed a plan that would have increased the minimum wage to \$10/hour by 2014.

Under Governor Cuomo's proposed plan the minimum wage would increase to \$11.50/hour in New York City and \$10.50/hour in New York State by the end of 2016. The proposal no cost-of-living index or adjustments.

BALCONY continues to believe that raising the minimum wage is an issue that cannot wait, and that Governor Cuomo's proposal, while it may represent a small step in the right direction, needs to be amended and bolstered so that it acts as more than a Band-Aid; so that it addresses real and immediate needs of New York's working poor, our families, and our economy now and for the future.

In January **BALCONY** put forth a press release outlining the organization's stance on the Governor's plan to raise the minimum wage titled "[Time to Get Serious about Raising the Minimum Wage.](#)"



Gov. Cuomo with BALCONY member Stuart Appelbaum, President of RWDSU, a leading member of the coalition to raise the minimum wage.

Now is the Moment to Expand and Strengthen the Living Wage Law

by Stuart Appelbaum

With strong and committed progressive leaders in charge of city government--Mayor Bill de Blasio and Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito--there is a major opportunity to take this living wage legislation to the next level. The best way to do that is by expanding the scope of the legislation so it includes a "labor harmony" requirement for all future economic development projects subsidized by taxpayer dollars.

Read the full article: [Living Wage](#)



Recently **BALCONY** treasurer and **President and CEO of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce Mark Jaffe** was highlighted in a [Daily News article](#) about downstate business leaders who support Governor Andrew Cuomo's increase in the minimum wage.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN NEW YORK CITY AND STATE



"Project labor agreements negotiated between the Mayor and the unions would allow both sides to achieve their shared mutual goals of creating affordable housing and providing decent working conditions."

-- Michael Locker, President, Locker Associates

There is a crisis of affordability in New York City. Last year Mayor de Blasio's office put forth an ambitious \$41 billion 10 year affordable housing plan. The Mayor's plan calls for the construction of 80,000 new apartments and the restoration of 120,000 more. If the Mayor's plan is implemented it would provide half a million New Yorkers the opportunity to live in affordable housing. In addition, the program would create an estimated 194,000 construction jobs and 7,100 new permanent positions.

BALCONY supports the goals of the Mayor's plan and looks forward to its implementation which should include project labor agreements.

In **January BALCONY member Michael Locker, President of Locker Associates, authored an excellent article** titled "[Affordable Housing Opportunity must be Embraced](#)" in support of Mayor de Blasio's affordable housing plan that appeared in City and State.

BALCONY AFFORDABLE HOUSING FORUM



(left to right: NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation & Development Commissioner Vicki Been; NYS Homes and Community Renewal/CEO Darryl Towns; and NYC Public Advocate Letitia James)

On February 4, 2015 BALCONY hosted a forum on affordable housing featuring **NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development Commissioner Vicki Been** and **NYS Homes and Community Renewal/CEO Darryl Towns** and **NYC Public Advocate Letitia James** as well as a panel of housing experts from government, labor, energy, finance, development and tenant's advocacy.

"In a moment that epitomized the spirit of cooperation that characterized the BALCONY Housing forum, Ed Wallace, Co-Chair of the law firm Greenberg Traurig, LLP, which represents major housing developers, and John Skinner, President of Local 46 Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Ironworkers, agreed that now is the time for labor and developers to work together on meaningful project labor agreements (PLA) in order to ensure that the Mayor's plan is executed expeditiously, fairly, and safely."

Here is the Video Report of the forum: [**Affordable Housing**](#)

NEW YORK NEEDS MAJOR INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE



Infrastructure in New York State is in a state of crisis. This is an issue that BALCONY has long been committed to and we continue to look for ways our members can come together to find common sense solutions.

In November of 2014 **BALCONY** member **Joyce Miller, President and CEO of Tier One Strategies**, authored an [insightful article](#) on the need for an infrastructure bond act in New York that appeared in City and State.

❖ *In the coming months BALCONY will host a forum on the potential for investing pension funds in infrastructure. The event will feature elected officials and infrastructure experts. Please stay tuned for more specifics.*

EDUCATION: A BATTLE FOR NEW YORK'S STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS



NYSUT President Karen Magee addressing education rally.

TEACHER TENURE

On January 21st, in his State of the State address, Governor Andrew Cuomo heightened the debate over teacher tenure. The Governor claimed that it is so difficult to fire ineffective teachers that most districts "don't even try," endorsed test-driven evaluation systems as the primary means by which to judge a teacher's effectiveness, and proposed an increase in the waiting period for teachers to receive tenure from 3 to 5 years.

Ultimately, in addressing the problems with New York's public education system, the Governor pointed the finger at teachers and tenure.



In March **BALCONY Executive Board Member Cynthia DiBartolo, Chairperson of the Greater New York Chamber of Commerce, and CEO of Tigress Financial Partners authored an op-ed** that appeared in *City and State*. The [article](#) was significant as rarely if ever have representatives of the business community come out in support of teacher tenure, which is largely seen as purely a labor issue.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

BALCONY is concerned about Governor Cuomo's education reform proposal, which includes, amongst other things, raising the cap on charter schools by 22%, from 460 to 560. The Governor made it clear that he plans to replace 'failing' public schools with new state-funded charters. Additionally, Governor Cuomo has pledged to withhold more than \$700 million in public school funding if his reform agenda is not accepted in full by the legislature.

BALCONY's position is that this 'reform' plan is misguided, and we question the efficacy of the strong-arm tactics being employed by the Governor. **BALCONY** believes that it is critical to support and fund our public schools, which continue to be the primary avenue of education for the vast majority of New York's children.



UFT President and **BALCONY** Member **Michael Mulgrew's** recently authored an article for the NY Daily News' education series "Fight for Their Future"

Reformers are Selling Snake Oil

*By: Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers
NY Daily News, Thursday, March 19, 2015*

In 19th century America, so called "medicine shows" toured rural areas, combining entertainment acts with hucksters pitching pills, powders and potions that promised cures for everything from baldness to cancer despite any evidence any of it worked.

Today's advocates of "school reform" are doing much the same, peddling nostrums they promise will somehow solve the problems in our schools - many of them highlighted in the Daily News series - even though serious research demonstrates that these strategies don't work.

Take Gov. Cuomo's call for a "Teacher Excellence Fund" that would give \$20,000 bonuses to teachers who earn top ratings.

There are many expert reports - most recently a 2010 study by Vanderbilt University - that document the failure of such initiatives around the country, including former Mayor Michael Bloomberg's program of school wide bonuses that had to be abandoned as a \$56 million failure.

How about the governor's plan for outside entities to take over so-called "failing schools"?

Changing the governance of a troubled district is no recipe for success. Twelve years after the state took over the schools of Roosevelt L.I., results remain disappointing, as they do in other jurisdictions.

And why would we expand the number of charter schools before they actually meet their obligation to educate a representative number of the city's neediest children?

Our kids and schools won't get better with the reformers' version of the "snake oil" of the old medicine shows.

The keys to better schools are active and involved parents, well trained and supported teachers, and focusing social and medical services in school buildings as in our community schools program.

Rather than the "miracle elixirs" that schools reformers keep prescribing, these funds could be used for proven strategies like lower class size, sufficient books and supplies, after-school programs and wrap-around social services for students and their families.

PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS



BALCONY supports the passage of the **Women's Equality Act**, originally introduced several years ago by Governor Cuomo.

While the original bill has since been amended to exclude language that protects abortion rights in the interest of ensuring passage of the package legislation, **BALCONY** continues to believe that passage of this [bill](#) in its current form is critical.

The package includes equal-pay legislation and sexual-harassment protections.

By breaking up the legislation, state lawmakers should be able to reach agreement on a [bill](#) that speaks to common sense legislation, such as toughening laws on sex trafficking. Another part of the act looks to guarantee workplace accommodations for pregnant women, and outlaw sexual harassment at even the smallest businesses, which are currently exempt.

Update: On March 16th the Assembly passed an [anti-trafficking legislation package](#).

FAMILY LEAVE ACT IN NEW YORK STATE



On March 17th, the New York Assembly passed the Paid Family Leave Act, which is supported by the [New York Paid Leave Coalition](#), a new **BALCONY** member.

The Paid Family Leave legislation passed by the Assembly today allows for up to 12 weeks of paid family leave for New York workers to care for new children or a seriously ill loved one by expanding the existing Temporary Disability Insurance program, an insurance program already familiar to businesses. The family leave expansion would be financed entirely by modest employee payroll contributions.

BALCONY fully supports this legislation and commends the Assembly for passing it.

To learn more about family leave legislation please check out the following article from the New York Times

["Advocates Press Cuomo to Take Action on Paid Family Leave Legislation"](#)

...as well as the following opinion piece by **State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr.** that appeared in the Times Union.

["Paid leave will strengthen families, businesses and state"](#)

SAVING THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET



BALCONY believes that our country's **Social Security** system represents the best of America's values: reward for hard work, prudent management, human dignity, and responsibility for ourselves, as well as for our parents, our children, our spouses, and our neighbors, through the sharing of risk.

After a lifetime of work, Americans deserve a secure, independent old age. With the decline of traditional pensions, the riskiness of 401(k) plans, and the loss of home equity, our Social Security system is more important than ever. Social Security fortifies our families, our communities and our nation against events to which all are subject - disability, premature death, or living to a very old age.

Deficit reduction talks in Washington have turned to cuts in Social Security with a chained consumer price index (CPI) and other plans to cut Medicare and Medicaid.

For more on the most recent developments please check out the following statement by **Robert Greenstein, President of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities**, on the House Budget Chairman's plan: [Statement](#)

[**GOP Budget Plan: Slash Spending, Transform Medicare, Boost Military**](#)

Attacks on social security and safety net protections in Washington are of great concern to **BALCONY**. We urge our members to educate themselves on this issue.

In particular we hope that you will check out the ***No Grand Bargain Network***, which has recently partnered with Metro Health Care and other **BALCONY** allies in the effort to protect social security and the social safety net.

The ***No Grand Bargain Network***

The Network was formed to "help turn back the attacks by "deficit hawks" on the nation's social protections and other vital public programs, participants from more than 50 NY labor, business, advocacy, and community organizations have come together in a campaign to protect and strengthen Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP/food-stamps and other public programs critical for the health and well-being of low-income, minority, elderly, disabled, and other vulnerable populations as well as of middle class and working people generally."

Link: [**Rekindling Reform**](#)

HEALTH CARE



The recently released budget from the Republican controlled House of Representatives seeks to repeal the *Affordable Health Care Law*. BALCONY continues to support the *Affordable Health Care Law*, which have advocated since its inception, and urges our members to do the same.

For more on the House budget and the threat it poses to the health care law please follow the link to the New York Times article below:

[House Republican Budget Overhauls Medicare and Repeals the Health Law](#)



BALCONY member Mark Hannay has been at the forefront of coalition work with the Metro NY Health Care for All Campaign for more than 20 years.

As the New York State Legislature's annual budget session draws to a close by the end of this month, consumer, community, and labor advocates are corraling their forces to influence the negotiations between Governor Cuomo, the State Senate, and the State Assembly, and weighing in with their top policy and funding priorities.

Here are some of what health care advocates are focusing on:

- * Funding for the "[NY State of Health](#)" health benefits exchange marketplace
- * Funding for the "[Community Health Advocates](#)" (CHA) program
- * Funding for operating a new "Basic Health Program" (BHP)
- * Funding for "transitional immediate need Medicaid" services
- * Funding for the [Independent Consumer Advocacy Network \(ICAN\)](#)
- * New co-pays for some Medicaid patients
- * Preserving important consumer protections of "spousal and parental refusal" and "prescriber prevails"
- * Adopting a "Community First Choice" (CFC) option
- * Indigent care funding for hospitals
- * Private equity demonstration projects
- * Capital funding for community-based entities

You can read about these issues in more detail [here](#).

Mark Hannay
Director

Statements from BALCONY Members on Current Issues



FPI BUDGET REVIEW

BALCONY member **FPI** (the **Fiscal Policy Institute**) is renowned for their analysis of New York's economy.

On March 3rd at a **BALCONY Members Meeting** in Albany, **FPI Executive Director Ron Deutsch** gave a special presentation on Governor Cuomo's 2015 Budget

BUDGET ANALYSIS

❖ *BALCONY recommends reading the following FPI policy briefs that address two issues that we believe are of critical importance for our members*

[Property tax circuit breaker.](#)

[Education Tax Credit \(ETC\)](#)

New York State Public Employees Federation NYS Budget Review



A Statement from PEF president Susan Kent on Governor Cuomo's 2015 Budget



"We have some concerns with the budget plan unveiled by Gov. Andrew Cuomo today. First, the proposed 2015-16 budget proposal includes no funding increases for state agencies. With agency budgets remaining flat, understaffing will continue and needed public services in communities will decline. Yet, the governor emphasized how he believes in community and that 'the New York way is one for all, and all

for one.'

"The governor spoke about the billions of dollars in settlement funds the state has received and how he has earmarked the money. PEF members were directly responsible for bringing that \$5.4 billion into New York. We believe the governor and the Legislature should recognize the value of the work done by the professional workers represented by PEF in securing the settlement by ensuring funds from the windfall are reinvested, in part, to state agencies to maintain and improve public services in all New York communities."

To see PEF's full statement please follow this [link](#).

PEF has also created a [flyer](#) outlining their concerns regarding specific issues addressed in the budget and their potential impact on the union.

EFFECTIVE NY: Make New York's Legislators Full Time

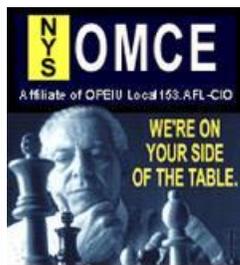


Long time **BALCONY** supporter, businessman and activist **Bill Samuels** has put forth a progressive plan regarding [pay for state legislators](#).

Update: New York's attorney general, Eric T. Schneiderman, has called for an [elimination of all outside jobs for state legislators and the end of a widely criticized system of per diem payments](#).

OMCE Speaks out on Management/Confidential Employees Pay

"Ten years is too long to wait for Management/Confidential state employees to get full payment of withheld salary increases!"



Management/Confidential (M/C) employees had their salary increases withheld in 2009 and 2010 as a result of the economic collapse of 2008. In his 2015 Executive Budget Governor Cuomo introduced a salary parity proposal that would pay back the withheld earned income over the course of four years.

While OMCE appreciates the Governor acknowledging the pay disparity, they say that M/Cs have already waited 6 years and ten years is too long to wait.

M/C workers have already lost thousands of dollars waiting for the Governor and the legislature to negotiate a solution. Additionally, under the Governor's current proposal, an employee who leaves state service over the next decade would also lose their right to recoup the owed wages.

Imagine you were promised a wage increase at age 59 and are now being told you will have to work until you are nearly 70 years old to collect.

OMCE asks the legislature and the governor to negotiate an accelerated payment schedule that fairly compensates hard working New York M/C employees now.



OMCE President Barbara Zaron and Executive Director Joe Sano

To learn more about this issue and/or **OMCE** please visit [OMCE](#).

New York State United Teachers on Governor Cuomo's Budget



To see where NYSUT stands on key education issues as regards Governor Cuomo's 2015 budget please follow these links:

[Magee: Calling out Gov. Cuomo for his anti-public education agenda](#)

[NYSUT weighs in on Senate Majority's proposals](#)

[NYSUT applauds Assembly budget bill](#)