

Cuomo, legislators warn of uncertain, tight fiscal times ahead

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News, views and commentary on Long Island, state and national politics.

ALBANY — More than 270 caregivers took time out Thursday from working with the mentally ill, homeless and physically disabled to lobby for more funding so their nonprofit agencies can better afford the state's rising minimum wage. But they faced a cold truth in Albany, where legislators told them little added spending is expected in the upcoming state budget.

"This is a labor of love," Assemb. Patricia Fahey (R-Delmar) told the care workers at a news conference. "But love alone will not carry the day. . . . We are walking in with less money than past years."

She noted that unlike a year ago, the state budget won't benefit from a windfall of more than \$1 billion from law enforcement settlements with banks.

She and other Albany-area members, Democrats John McDonald and Phil Steck, said the legislature is bracing for a tighter 2017-18 budget proposal in January from Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

Hours later at his own news event, Cuomo confirmed uncertain and tight times ahead. He said he's unsure how Republican President-elect Donald Trump will handle major federal sources of revenue to New York, including reimbursement for Medicaid health care for the poor.

"The economy and receipts have slowed already," he said. "Exactly how much, we don't know yet. And then we have to see what the federal government does . . . if they go with the classic conservative governmental theory of cutting those programs to the high-needs states, it's going to be a serious problem."

His executive budget proposal is expected in January. No details of spending or revenue have yet been released.

The fiscal forecast concerned the caregivers in Albany Thursday who work at nonprofit agencies that deliver social services through state funding. Leaders at the agencies said they don't have enough funding to pay higher salaries under the state's graduated increase in the minimum wage from \$9 now to up to \$15 at different regional rates by 2021. The nonprofit groups also said they will lose skilled workers to fast-food restaurants, which under a state order will pay a rising minimum wage in annual stages up to \$15 an hour in New York City in 2018 and

statewide in 2021.

Cuomo has said he will try in the state budget to help nonprofit groups afford the higher wages through larger state grants, but no agreement has yet been made.

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