

Cuomo's Budget Whittles at All Corners of the State

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ALBANY — Homeless shelters in New York City could be forced to cut back on services. State support for cancer research could be curtailed. Some college students receiving help to pay for school could lose their money.

In many ways, Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) wielded a budgetary meat cleaver on Tuesday [when he proposed billions of dollars of cuts](#) to [Medicaid](#) spending, school aid and state government. But he also applied a scalpel, making smaller nicks and cuts in every corner of the state.

“Fairness was very important in this budget to us,” Mr. Cuomo said in his budget address. “We spent a lot of time on allocating the loss.”

Many of those smaller cuts will be negotiated with public employee unions. But the specific reductions proposed in Mr. Cuomo's \$132.9 billion budget could affect a wide range of New Yorkers, including students trying to make college affordable and veterans in need of nursing care.

An examination of the smaller cuts provides a clear view of Mr. Cuomo's priorities in getting a grip on the state's finances. When his father, [Mario M. Cuomo](#), inherited a nearly \$2 billion deficit on taking office as governor in 1983, he emphasized that fiscal prudence should not stop state government from providing “shelter for the homeless, work for the idle, care for the elderly and infirm and hope for the destitute” — even as he prepared to ask for 14,000 state layoffs.

The younger Mr. Cuomo's message has been different. He argued on Tuesday that government spending was simply out of control.

“This is a death spiral,” Mr. Cuomo said. “I believe if we continue doing what we're doing, the state goes down the road to ruin.”

Yet Mr. Cuomo blunted his call to cut the size of government with an argument that smaller government could be more effective in serving New Yorkers. In many cases in his budget where he proposes specific cuts to programs, the governor offers the programs a chance to survive by giving officials an opportunity to apply for newly created competitive grants, borrowing a tactic from his time as federal housing secretary.

The level of dismay among those affected by Mr. Cuomo's proposals varied considerably on Wednesday.

Environmental groups, for instance, said they considered it a victory that the governor kept financing steady for the Environmental Protection Fund.

But a variety of cuts to programs are sprinkled throughout the budget.

Training programs designed to improve the quality of child welfare services would be eliminated. So would a telephone hot line about patients' rights, as well as education programs about elderly abuse. State financing would also be eliminated for [the state's Foster Grandparent Program](#), in which seniors mentor special-needs youths.

"There are wonderful benefits both to the foster grandparents and the children they work with," said Kathleen A. Bunnell, the director of the [Office for Aging in Broome County](#). The foster grandparent program in Ms. Bunnell's county, where 65 "grandparents" mentor about 200 children, relies far more on federal money than state money. "We can make it work," she said. "Would other counties tell you the same thing? Maybe not."

Other cuts affecting young people include a reduction in financing to a state [student loan](#) program (\$6 million) and changes to the state's formulas for providing tuition assistance (\$31 million).

Some cuts focused on areas not typically discussed among those who walk the halls of the Capitol. Money for building maintenance at the State Fair would be cut nearly in half (\$750,000). The head of the state Athletic Commission, which oversees professional boxing and wrestling, would become unpaid (\$154,000).

Other cuts focused on social services. The budget sharply reduces state financing to New York City homeless shelters (\$16 million) and eliminates aid for a city program that provides housing subsidies to homeless people who find stable jobs and leave shelters (\$35 million).

"When you make deep cuts into services, especially for the most vulnerable, they have long-term social consequences," said Arnold S. Cohen, the president of the [Partnership for the Homeless](#). "They might look good in the short term, but in the long term it's going to become more costly for us."

A wide range of health care programs would lose at least some of their dedicated financing and would have to compete for dollars. They include programs for brain trauma, eating disorders, osteoporosis prevention and sudden infant death syndrome. The development of new programs for problem gambling would be delayed, while existing programs would be cut back.

Subsidies for the [State University of New York](#)'s teaching hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse would end, while support for the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo would be reduced. ("It will cause us serious hardship," the institute's president, Dr. Donald L. Trump, said.)

And in some cases, Mr. Cuomo is proposing to scale back elements of his father's legacy. The budget for the [Long Island State Veterans Home](#), which the elder Mr. Cuomo opened in 1991, would be cut 10 percent, saving the state \$4.7 million.

Fred S. Sganga, the home's executive director, has already begun lobbying against the cut. He said the home, which is at virtually 100 percent capacity, would suffer enough from the other health care cuts that Mr. Cuomo had proposed.

"It's ridiculous," Mr. Sganga said. "It's clear to me that the governor's office does not understand the state veterans home program."