

PLUMBERS AND GASFITTERS LOCAL UNION NO. 1
OF THE
UNITED ASSOCIATION OF JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES OF THE PLUMBING
AND PIPE FITTING INDUSTRY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
NEW YORK CITY



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March 19, 2026

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MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

To: Governor Kathy Hochul and Members of the New York State Legislature

From: United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada, Local Union No. 1
(Plumbers Local 1)

Re: Inclusion of Tier 6 Pension Reform in the Final State Budget

Plumbers Local 1, representing more than 6,000 skilled tradespeople across New York City, respectfully urges the Governor and the Legislature to include meaningful Tier 6 pension reform in the final State Budget.

On April 1, 2012, the New York State Legislature unnecessarily enacted Tier 6 as a reaction to fiscal pressures and anti-union rhetoric that unfairly targeted defined benefit pension systems. Time has proven that the State has always had the capacity to maintain the retirement benefits afforded to prior generations of public workers. Instead, Tier 6 imposed reduced benefits and higher contribution requirements, shifting the burden onto workers who continue to provide essential public services. This knee-jerk response to political pressure undermined a system that had long provided stability, fairness, and retirement security, and it is now clear that these changes were both unwarranted and counterproductive. benefits for workers, to convince the state to support a defined contribution model.

New York's Tier 6 pension system penalizes public sector workers by requiring them to pay higher contributions while receiving reduced retirement benefits. In many cases, Tier 6 employees receive less favorable benefits than co-workers performing the exact same job under earlier pension tiers. This disparity is fundamentally unfair and undermines the promise of equitable treatment for public servants.

Tier 6 has also become a significant barrier to recruitment and retention, discouraging the next generation of workers from pursuing careers in public service. As a result, New York

is facing a growing public workforce and service crisis, with agencies across the state struggling to attract and retain qualified personnel. These shortages have led to excessive mandatory overtime, declining morale, and rising costs for public employers.

Compounding this inequity, Tier 6 workers are required to contribute toward their pensions on all earnings, including overtime, while the amount of pensionable overtime is capped. This structure forces workers to pay more into the system without receiving proportional benefits—further exacerbating the inequities within Tier 6.

Over the past several years, the labor movement has worked collaboratively with policymakers to achieve incremental reforms to Tier 6, including improvements to vesting requirements and Final Average Salary calculations. While these changes are meaningful, Tier 6 remains fundamentally flawed and continues to disadvantage hardworking public employees.

Comprehensive Tier 6 reform is necessary to restore fairness and parity by aligning benefits for Tier 5 and Tier 6 employees with those in Tier 4. Doing so will strengthen recruitment and retention, provide greater retirement security, and ensure that New York can continue to deliver the vital public services that residents rely on every day. Furthermore, more generous pension benefits mean that public sector workers will have the ability to retire within the state of New York.

For these reasons, Plumbers Local 1 respectfully calls upon Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to include meaningful Tier 6 pension reform in the final enacted State Budget.

Sincerely,



Paul O'Connor
Business Manager

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