The new federal tax law will directly undermine the health and stability of families and individuals across our state. Not only will many households see a tax increase, but the resulting budget cuts will also have a devastating impact on the programs New Yorkers rely on to meet their basic needs.

Nonprofit human services organizations are our first line of defense against the dangerous fiscal policies coming from Washington. As we head into 2018, the state must invest in these organizations, which make up the permanent foundation that supports our communities.

New York state contracts with nonprofits to deliver services on its behalf so that New Yorkers have what they need at every stage of life to do well socially, emotionally, financially, and physically. This includes things like early childhood education, supportive housing, job training and elder care.

Despite the clear importance of this work, most state contracts do not cover the full cost of running these essential programs, and nonprofits are left to fill the gaps. Decades of underfunding have resulted in a sector that has been stretched to its breaking point. Our organizations have been sounding the alarm for years, and in these challenging times, it is more important than ever for our elected leaders to respond.

A coalition of 350 nonprofit human services providers, Strong Nonprofits for a Better New York, is calling on the state to support nonprofit capital
improvements and fund wages for our workforce so that we can sustain
critical services and programs.
In his State of the State address, Gov. Andrew Cuomo rightly highlighted the
epidemic of poverty impacting millions of New Yorkers, but his history of policy
and funding decisions have undermined the very organizations that are tasked
with addressing this issue.
With low wages and diminishing benefits, frontline workers are increasingly
finding themselves in the same position as the people they serve, seeking
social services to provide for their families. This results in low morale and high
turnover, which ultimately undermines the quality of programs. This educated
workforce is extremely underpaid, and given that the human services
workforce is 81% women, and 46% people of color, fair wages are a real
equity issue.
New York’s $15 minimum wage was a step in the right direction and the
nonprofit sector supports this increase for both our workers and the clients we
serve. However, the state is responsible for setting the wages of this
workforce, and without funding for this new mandate, nonprofits will have to
lay off staff or close programs in order to make up the difference. We are
asking the state to fund the minimum wage on direct contracts ($23 million)
and to provide wage adjustments for workers who were left out of last year’s
budget ($65 million).
In addition to a strong workforce, nonprofits need solid infrastructure. Our
organizations often put off capital improvements due to lack of funds, which
means many have outdated technology and buildings in need of repair. The
state has created a program to address these needs. The Nonprofit
Infrastructure Capital Investment Program (NICIP) allows nonprofits to
undertake important projects that aren’t supported by their contracts. But the
need far outweighs the current funding stream. Since its inception, 635 organizations have applied for funds, but less than half have received awards. We urge the state to increase the NICIP fund and implement a recurring investment of $100 million per year so that nonprofits will be better able help New Yorkers access vital services.

Nonprofit human services providers are integral to the strength of our communities and to ensuring they reach their full potential. As a progressive leader, New York must take a stand and invest in its nonprofit workforce and infrastructure at this critical juncture. We must bolster our nonprofits so they can withstand whatever challenges come our way. The wellbeing of all New Yorkers depends on it.

Allison Sesso is executive director of the Human Services Council of New York, an organization representing nonprofit human service organizations across the state.