

# Westchester Frets Budget Impact Of Medicaid Plan

By Nick Reisman

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Shifting Medicaid costs onto local governments would "destroy our budget," Westchester County Executive George Latimer told state lawmakers on Friday.

"We are still working to find alternative ways to provide financial relief for our residents on both state and local levels, and will support any creative strategies that the legislature and the governor put forth to meet these challenges. That is why we are concerned about Westchester County having to fund significant additional Medicaid costs – a move that could destroy our budget," Latimer told the delegation that represents the county in Albany. "Covering this cost will mean that roads, services and most importantly our taxpayers will suffer."

Latimer, a Democrat and former member of the legislature, is the latest county executive to raise concerns with Governor Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal amid a [multi-billion-dollar gap in Medicaid spending](#). His concerns echo the issues raised by New York City officials this week and the hit their budget would take as a result.

Cuomo's plan would have counties spend more under the Medicaid program if property taxes increase by 2 percent, paying for any increases in local Medicaid spending that is more than 3 percent annually.

Cuomo intends to re-form the Medicaid Redesign Team to find additional savings and close a budget gap.

But the governor, in his budget address, pointed to a freeze in county Medicaid costs by the state, which gave them no incentive to curb costs. The cause of the Medicaid gap is, in large part, due to spending increases for long-term care, as well as increases in the minimum wage.

And county governments don't want to be blamed.

"We have always found that working together is the best way to find solutions that benefit all parties involved and so we hope that now in these sensitive and fragile times we can work together to help our taxpayers," Latimer said.

"Westchester has begun addressing budget challenges, and we will continue on this fiscal prudent path."