



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## As Food Desert Persists in Lackawanna, Senator Kennedy Joins Cornell Cooperative to Create Community Garden at Mount Olive Baptist Church

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY June 1, 2018

| ISSUE: **FOOD DESERT, HEALTHY FOOD, COMMUNITY GARDENS**



*With Only One Small Grocery Store in City Limits, Lackawanna Residents Continue to Have Limited Access to Affordable, Fresh Foods*

*Creation of New Garden Comes as Kennedy Pens Letter to Five Supermarkets, Asking Executives to Consider Adding New Store in Lackawanna*

LACKAWANNA, NY – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) joined leadership in Lackawanna Friday to announce a new community garden designed to offer residents a new point of access to healthy and locally-sourced produce. The City of Lackawanna is currently considered a “food desert,” or a low-income community where at least one-third of the population lives more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. In addition to assisting in the garden's creation, Kennedy penned a letter to executives at Aldi, PriceRite, Price Chopper, Stop & Shop and Lidl, asking them to consider adding a much-needed store within the city limits. Citing the city's population of over 17,000, much of which is low-income, he underscored the critical need for these businesses to invest in Lackawanna and deliver access to nutritional foods so that people can live and eat healthier.

“Residents in the City of Lackawanna deserve better when it comes to quality, accessible, and healthy food, and with the creation of this garden, it is our hope that they receive just that,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “Our work is far from done; ultimately we want to see a fully-stocked, centrally-located grocer set up shop in Lackawanna, so that we have a comprehensive, year-round fix to the food desert that exists. But as we continue to fight for a more equitable long-term solution, I'm proud to partner with community and faith-based leaders to address the immediate need and gap in access, so that residents have an option they can rely on.”

Kennedy and his staff joined leaders from Cornell Cooperative, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Lackawanna Community Garden, and Blasdel Nursey to help shape garden beds, plant seeds, and educate volunteers on how to harvest and sustain the garden. The garden will contain tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers among other vegetables. It is located next to Mount Olive Baptist Church, and will be maintained in part by parishioners. This is the second community garden created in Lackawanna; the first is located on Southshore Boulevard outside the Lackawanna City School District Administration Building.

“Some seed fell on good ground and began to grow. It got taller and produced a crop. Some plants made thirty times more, some made sixty times more, and some made a hundred times more,” said **Pastor Keith D. Mobley of Mt. Olive Baptist Church**. “Our prayers are that as we plant this garden, lives will be changed for the better.”

“Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County (CCE Erie) is pleased to see a new garden springing up in this Lackawanna neighborhood,” said **Sharon Bachman of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County**. “CCE Erie is partnering with Senator Kennedy’s office and others in the community on Cornell’s statewide Seed to Supper efforts to provide adults training and resources they need to garden on a budget.”

A copy of Kennedy’s letter is below:

May 11, 2018

Dear Mr. Kibling,

As the State Senator representing the City of Lackawanna in New York State, I write to ask for your consideration in Aldi locating a new site in Lackawanna’s First Ward, a U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified food desert. As Aldi’s mission includes caring about people, communities and the world, I believe Aldi could make an important contribution to the area.

Those living in the City of Lackawanna, especially within the First Ward, do not have easy access to healthy food like fresh fruits, vegetables, and produce. Located between Route 5 along Lake Erie and the heavy rail corridor west of South Park Avenue, Lackawanna’s First Ward is considered a food desert. According to the U.S.D.A., food deserts are defined as low-income communities where at least one-third of the population lives more than a mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. The area of Lackawanna west of South Park Avenue

qualifies as both a low income and low access food desert. These areas rely heavily on small corner stores that primarily provide processed, unhealthy foods that are known contributors to our nation's obesity epidemic.

Lackawanna is a community that offers great opportunity. The main thoroughfare serving the First Ward, Ridge Road, sees average daily traffic over over 11,000 vehicles, and Route 5, which has an exit and onramp on Ridge Road, hosts nearly 45,000 vehicles per day. The city recently received a \$2.5 million grant from the State of New York to support streetscaping, pedestrian enhancements, and improved connectivity, such as the creation of a bike lane on Ridge Road.

With a population of over 17,000, the City of Lackawanna, as well as the surrounding areas, would greatly benefit from the addition of a high quality grocery store. My hope is that Aldi will consider establishing a new location in the area of the First Ward, making affordable and nutritious food available to residents so they can live healthier and more productive lives. There are several tracts of land that would be well-suited for a grocery store, and I am confident the City of Lackawanna government would be eager to help identify the ideal site for a store.

Again, I respectfully request that Aldi consider locating a new store in the City of Lackawanna's First Ward area. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please contact me in my district office at 716-826-2683.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy

New York State Senator, 63rd District