



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Kavanagh, Colleagues Push State to Release \$45 Million Allocated for Summer Youth Employment Program

BRIAN KAVANAGH June 29, 2020

| ISSUE: **YOUTH, EMPLOYMENT, SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, COVID-19, FUNDING**



On June 29, 2020, Senator Kavanagh, along with 74 of his colleagues, wrote to Governor Cuomo to urge him to address delays in releasing funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program and to ensure that the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance expedites approval of plans submitted by community organizations that are required for the program to move forward. The legislators highlighted the importance of SYEP and the extensive work that organizations have done to create a version of the program that is suitable for the summer of 2020, given the constraints of COVID-19. The text of the legislators' letter is below; the original may be viewed via the link above.

June 29, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of New York State

Executive Chamber

State Capitol

Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write with an urgent request that requires your immediate attention. As you know, the FY 2020- 2021 Budget finalized on April 2, 2020, included \$45 million for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). This funding, which is allocated from New York's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, goes to support subsidized wages for the lowest-income SYEP participants and SYEP activities for counties across the State. In total, our investment funds approximately 19,000 summer employment experiences for young New Yorkers.

While we completely understand the health and public safety concerns posed by the traditional, in-person internship-based model of SYEP as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen counties work quickly across the State to develop alternative, safe program models that are ready to operate beginning in July. Those localities have run into challenges coordinating with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). OTDA must approve the alternative plans submitted by the localities, but as of June 26, 2020, all the plans submitted are still "under review" by OTDA and it is unclear whether funds will be available to localities for summer 2020 programming.

Furthermore, OTDA released guidance to Departments of Social Service this week stating that:

At least 80% [of SYEP participants] must be engaged in traditional paid employment activities with no more than 30% of hourly participation for these SYEP participants in non-employment activities such as career exploration, mentoring outside the workplace, financial literacy, or education. Paid employment may include remote work so long as the position is consistent with work the employer would typically engage in but is being conducted remotely due to COVID-19 business requirements or precautions.

Depending on the locality, many are unprepared to meet this benchmark. Most of the planning done in preparation for Summer 2020 has been done under the assumption that virtual learning/career exploration would make up a large portion of programming. With programming traditionally commencing in early July, it is too late for localities to shift their plans and develop sufficient worksites to comply with these requirements.

State legislators work every year to make SYEP a priority and ensure that these funds are included in the budget. Keeping SYEP funded at last years' level was particularly difficult during this budget as we were dealing with a rapidly growing deficit which left us unable to restore numerous programs to prior year levels. We are disappointed that OTDA would delay in approving the plans submitted to them, because the uncertainty that results means that providers across the State are left in limbo, unsure—with two weeks before programming should begin—whether or not they have the necessary funds to proceed.

During the current pandemic, with unemployment numbers expected to reach 500,000 in New York City alone, every dollar counts. The wages earned by young people through SYEP will be more critical than in previous years. We implore you to instruct OTDA to work swiftly to approve the plans submitted by localities so that DOB can release the funds to localities and programming can begin on time. We are struck by the racial and economic disparities revealed in the recently released statistics on COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths, and are acutely aware of how the economic impact caused by the pandemic will be felt hardest in

the low-income communities that most benefit from the State's SYEP investment.

We look forward to working with you to resolve this issue.

In partnership,

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud

Chair, Senate Social Services Committee

Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi

Chair, Assembly Social Services Committee

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

Chair, Senate Children & Families Committee

Assemblywoman Ellen C. Jaffee

Chair, Assembly Children & Families Committee

Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, 36th SD

Assemblyman Thomas J. Abinanti, 92nd AD

Senator Brian A. Benjamin, 30th SD

Assemblywoman Didi Barrett, 106th AD

Senator Alessandra Biaggi, 34th SD

Assemblyman Michael Blake, 79th AD

Senator George M. Borrello, 57th SD

Assemblyman Harry Bronson, 138th AD

Senator David Carlucci, 38th SD

Assemblyman David Buchwald, 93rd AD

Senator Leroy Comrie, 14th SD

Assemblyman Kevin A. Cahill, 103rd AD

Senator Simcha Felder, 17th SD

Assemblyman Steve Cymbrowtiz, 45th AD

Senator James Gaughran, 5th SD

Assemblyman Anthony D'Urso, 16th AD

Senator Andrew Gounardes, 22nd SD

Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens, 70th AD

Senator Brad Hoylman, 27th SD

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein, 48th AD

Senator Robert Jackson, 31st SD

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein, 74th AD

Senator Brian Kavanagh, 26th SD

Assemblyman Charles D. Fall, 61st AD

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, 63rd SD

Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernandez, 80th AD

Senator John C. Liu, 11th SD

Assemblywoman Mathylde Frontus, 46th AD

Senator Monica R. Martinez, 3rd SD

Assemblyman Josphe Giglio, 148th AD

Senator Rachel May, 53rd SD

Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick, 66th AD

Senator Shelley B. Mayer, 37th SD

Assemblywoman Pamela Hunter, 128th AD

Senator Jen Metzger, 42nd SD

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman, 29th AD

Senator Thomas F. O'Mara, 58th SD

Assemblyman Jonathan G. Jacobson, 104th AD

Senator Kevin S. Parker, 21st SD
Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner, 77th AD
Senator Jessica Ramos, 13th SD
Assemblyman Josep R. Lentol, 50th AD
Senator Gustavo Rivera, 33rd SD
Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, 123rd AD
Senator Julia C. Salazar, 18th SD
Assemblyman JohnT. McDonald III, 108th AD
Senator James Sanders, Jr., 10th SD
Assemblyman David G. McDonough, 14th AD
Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda, 32nd SD
Assemblyman John K. Mikulin, 17th AD
Senator Susan J. Serino, 41st SD
Assemblyman Walter T. Mosley, 57th AD
Senator James Skoufis, 39th SD
Assemblyman Daniel J. O'Donnell, 69th AD
Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, 16th SD
Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz, Asst. Speaker 51st AD
Senator Jim Tedisco, 49th SD
Assemblyman Steven Otis, 91st AD
Assemblyman Victor Pichardo, 86th AD
Assemblywoman Karines Reyes, R.N., 87th AD
Assemblywoman Diana C. Richardson, 43rd AD
Assemblyman Robert J. Rodriguez, 68th AD
Assemblywoman Linda B. Rosenthal, 67th AD
Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright, 76th AD
Assemblywoman Jo Ann Simon, 52nd AD

Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas, 36th AD

Assemblyman Steve Stern, 10th AD

Assemblyman Chris Tague, 102nd AD

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr., 1st AD

Assemblyman David Weprin, 24th AD

Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner, 113th AD