



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anthony H. Palumbo

Local Control, the Key to Protecting Long Island Communities from the Migrant Crisis

ANTHONY H. PALUMBO August 24, 2023



A recent Siena College poll shows that 82 percent of New Yorkers view the wave of migrants flooding our nation and state as a serious problem. Compounding the issue has been Washington and Albany's lack of action and a clear plan to address the humanitarian crisis their policies helped create.

This failure of leadership can be seen daily in the news—migrants sleeping on the streets, shuttled to hotels throughout the state, and haphazard plans complete with no-bid contracts

to house these individuals and families in tent cities or on college campuses.

While New York City and Albany lock horns, cast blame, and piece together last-minute plans to address a problem that has been a long time coming, we need to ensure that Long Island is shielded, not from migrants, but from the failed leadership and policies that created this man-made disaster.

That shield is local control.

During this year's Legislative Session, I joined my colleagues calling for policies to block the use of New York's ill-suited college campuses for migrant housing and proposed plans to bus them to our small communities without local input and approval.

We also requested that the Governor's office share with us the plan and the amount of New York tax dollars being used to house, transport and care for these individuals. Additionally, we requested the State Comptroller provide a fully transparent accounting of all tax dollars being spent and make that information available via a searchable, public database. This information is critical as the state faces severe financial challenges and we work to stop additional burdens being placed on local governments, schools and most importantly, taxpayers.

Recent history, from the pandemic to the Governor's failed housing proposals, has shown that the top down, Albany centric approach fails because it doesn't consider the diverse and unique communities that are the foundation of the Empire State.

In light of Governor Hochul's previously ill-conceived plan of housing migrants at Stony Brook University's main and Southampton Campuses, and other sites across Long Island, our local communities and officials must all be included in the discussion before any decisions are made.

County and Town officials are our partners and need to be treated as such. Strong local control, community input and funding from state and federal partners must be the first step toward crafting a plan to address the migrant crisis.

New Yorkers are a welcoming people, and their change in mood is not one of the heart, but in their lack of faith in the leadership of our state and nation. Midnight bus runs to motels and pop-up tent cities in suburban neighborhoods with inadequate services are not the answer.

The only solution comes with funding and proper planning. Plans where input from residents and approval from the Town and local officials are required. Building consensus is not always easy, but it is the only way New York State government will be able to solve this immediate humanitarian crisis and address the long-term impacts of uncontrolled migration until someone in Washington finds the courage to fix the crisis at our Southern Border.

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