



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

State Senators Call On Obama Administration To Restore Drug Prevention Funding

JOHN J. FLANAGAN January 12, 2010

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**

Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) joined with a number of his fellow state senators in calling upon the federal government to avoid eliminating more than \$1.5 million in federal aid aimed at creating safe, drug-free schools across Long Island. He was joined by Senators Kemp Hannon (6th SD), Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., (8th SD), Carl Marcellino (5th SD), Dean Skelos (9th SD), Owen H. Johnson (4th SD) and Senator Kenneth P. LaValle (1st SD) in calling for the Obama administration to rethink their recently announced decision to cut this important aid, especially in light of the staggering increase in the number of heroin-related arrests and overdoses among Long Islanders.

“Our schools are truly the first line of defense against this growing problem and, especially now, they need the support of the federal government to continue their grassroots efforts,” stated Senator Flanagan. “At a time when we should be fortifying their efforts, these cuts will force schools to eliminate important programs that are vital in the fight to protect our children from the dangers of drug-abuse and that is the wrong approach. I urge the Obama administration to stop looking at statistics and to reach out to our teachers and our school leaders to see how important this funding really is and how its elimination is short-sighted.”

Senator Hannon said, "It's completely unacceptable to be making cuts of this magnitude to our schools' drug prevention programs at this point in time. Statistics reflect a sharp increase in drug related arrests on Long Island, specifically heroin-related incidences. It is a certainty that these cuts will have a devastating impact upon our community. Drug preventative initiatives must be a priority on Long Island. I strongly urge members of Congress to repeal this decision immediately."

According to a report in Newsday, New York State is projected to lose a total of \$18.5 million in prevention program funding.

For schools in Senator Flanagan's district, the decision will have a substantial impact on their ability to provide educational programs designed to keep kids away from drugs.

"This funding is an important component of our overall health curriculum and I am hopeful that it can be preserved. While the \$32,000 we receive may seem like a small amount of money in Washington, it is critical to our efforts to combat a growing problem in our community and extremely important to the future of our children," stated Smithtown Central School District Superintendent Edward Ehmann. "Its loss would impact our ability to provide peer programs that allow our older students to share decision-making lessons with our elementary students and that would have a huge impact on every grade throughout our district."

In addition to the over \$32,000 lost in Smithtown, the cuts would include over \$21,000 to the Commack School District, over \$32,000 to the Middle Country Central School District and over \$41,000 to the Sachem Central School District.

At the same time as the federal government is cutting funds, the use of heroin is growing on Long Island with an alarming 126 percent spike in heroin-related charges in Suffolk County from 2005 to 2008.

"The Great Brain Drain has long been considered one of Long Island's greatest obstacles but it is no longer our young people's exodus for affordable housing or jobs but

their exodus in search of the ultimate high that is taking them away from us. Never in LI's recent history have prevention programs been more important than now. LI's young people are using prescription pills and heroin in unprecedented numbers," stated Maureen Rossi, President of Kings Park in the kNOw. "Kings Park in the kNOw applauds the efforts of Senator Flanagan and his peers. Long Island schools with good evidence based prevention programs are an integral part of the solution and it is critical that federal funding is not taken away from Long Island schools. Children are suffering, families are suffering and the time for action is now."

"Teenage drug use, particularly heroin, is a rapidly growing epidemic on Long Island. Cutting funding for anti-drug programs in our schools, as Washington is proposing, would have a disastrous impact on those who are fighting to keep drugs out of our children's hands. The federal government needs to immediately reconsider its decision," added Senator Fuschillo.

"Heroin use is rising at an alarming rate on Long Island. We have begun to make headway in raising awareness of this crisis. Now is not the time to back away. It is vital that all levels of government and all members of the community work together to educate our young people on the danger of drugs use and to aid in its prevention," said Senator Marcellino.

"We must do all we can to protect our young people from the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. These cuts will be devastating to our schools who are working hard with limited resources to educate and protect students from this growing epidemic," concluded Senator LaValle.