



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## State Senators, School Superintendents and Community Leaders Say Feds Should Reverse Decision Cutting Anti-Drug Funding for Li Schools

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. January 13, 2010

| ISSUE: **DRUGS**

State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., (8th SD), today joined with fellow Senators Kemp Hannon (6th SD), Carl Marcellino (5<sup>th</sup> SD), Dean Skelos (9<sup>th</sup> SD), Owen H. Johnson (4<sup>th</sup> SD), John Flanagan (2<sup>nd</sup> SD), and Senator Kenneth P. LaValle (1<sup>st</sup> SD) call upon members of Congress to forgo their decision to eliminate more than \$1.5 million in federal aid aimed at creating safe, drug-free schools across Long Island. This devastating decision was enacted despite a staggering increase in the number of heroin-related arrests and overdoses among Long Islanders.

Senator Fuschillo said, "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."

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."

New York State is projected to lose a total of \$18.5 million in prevention program funding. Among the Long Island school districts which previously received the most aid for federal drug education include: Brentwood at \$73,270, Hempstead at \$47,423 and William Floyd at \$46,860.

From 2005 to 2008, arrests on heroin-related charges in Nassau County increased by 91 percent. Suffolk County witnessed an alarming 126 percent spike. According to Detective Vincent Garcia, Public Information Officer for the Nassau County Police Department, there were 387 heroin arrests in 2009 alone.

Jamie Bogenshutz, Executive Director of YES Community Counseling Center said, "It's difficult to measure the impact, but any actions that speak to decreasing this type of funding in a time when we have such an increase in drug related deaths, is just incredulous. It speaks of not having any long term wisdom. Look at the statistics. The statics are not lying. This is the time when we should be increasing resources,

not decreasing them. Those individuals who made the decision to cut this federal aid should come into my neighborhood and speak with the parents whose lives have been changed forever because they lost their children due to a drug related incident. Then maybe they will have a better understanding of the importance of this funding.”

Patricia Watkins, Ph.D., Superintendent of the Hempstead Union Free School District said, “As a school system, we need to maintain these services, which greatly benefit our children. Due to this cut in funding, we will be forced to move the cost from the grant to the general fund. This would mean an increase in the general budget, which will adversely affect our community. With the growing diversities of our district, we must be able to provide the best services possible to our students, which include drug-free programs.”

Senator Skelos said, “This decision could not come at a worse time. With drug abuse among high school students on the rise, we need to make sure our schools have the resources needed to educate our youth about the dangers and consequences of drug abuse and addiction. This decision will ultimately force schools to curtail their anti-drug programs while drug addiction continues to spread. I hope our congressional leaders recognize the adverse impact of this decision and move to reinstate this funding.”

Senator Marcellino said, “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.”

Senator Johnson said, “Given the prevalence of drug use in our schools and the increased use of heroin among teens, we cannot allow this critical funding to be cut.”

Senator Flanagan said, “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. 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 LaValle said, “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.”

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