



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand Discuss Gang And Gun Violence Prevention Efforts in the City of Yonkers

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS April 29, 2010

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On Sunday, April 25th Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins joined Senator Kristen Gillibrand at the Yonkers YMCA to host a productive roundtable discussion with federal, State and County government officials, City Council Members and more than two dozen civic leaders, clergy members, community-based organization leaders, law enforcement officers and health and education professionals, on violent crime prevention through youth development

and anti-gang initiatives in the City of Yonkers.

The discussion focused on additional ways of working together to address the increasing levels of violent crimes in the area, and there was an exchange of information on current funding opportunities and resources that are available, as well as proposals for developing and strengthening illegal gun and gang violence prevention strategies.

“It was wonderful to have so many stakeholders and power brokers participating in this discussion. We are encouraged by the commitment of Senators Gillibrand and Stewart-Cousins and look forward to continuing the work in our communities and benefitting from the results,” said Rev. James Hassell of the Kingdom Christian Cultural Center.

“It was quite an astounding Sunday afternoon,” said Freda Macon, Assistant Director of CLUSTER, Inc. “The tone of the dialogue was set when Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins began the open discussion and shared the sentiment that her work with Senator Gillibrand has always been rewarding work. She was encouraging and enthusiastic about several federal funding possibilities and Senator Gillibrand assured the group that she will take our concerns back to Washington and continue to seek Federal funding opportunities for our community youth and families.”

“Each person that attended the meeting is committed to providing children with the greatest number of opportunities and, working together, we are stronger as a group than as individuals,” said Ann Marie Smith, First Vice President of the Yonkers Council of Parent-Teacher Associations “Senator Gillibrand and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins conducted an excellent discussion that provided information on ways to bring existing funding into Yonkers for early intervention and prevention of gang violence and drug abuse, and expanding after school programs, sports, music and the arts, which have not been utilized and will be a tremendous benefit for our children. We also spoke about the educational bill

that Senator Gillibrand co-sponsored which would bring millions of dollars to education in New York State.”

“Family Services of Westchester is encouraged to know that Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins are so focused on the problems of gang activity and violence in Yonkers. FSW supports the Senators' initiatives to increase the funding available to address these issues. FSW is thankful to Senator Stewart-Cousins for facilitating this discussion and we look forward to continuing collaboration with Yonkers Public Schools and other Yonkers community based organizations as we work together to improve the well-being of Yonkers youth and families,” said Polly Kerrigan, Senior Vice President for Family Services of Westchester.

“Gang violence, particularly among our teens and young adults, is a rapidly growing problem that has resulted in numerous deaths, and countless numbers of violent assaults within our community over the past decade. It is refreshing to see elected officials tackle the issues important to their constituents, not because it is politically correct, but because it is morally and ethically the right thing to do,” said Dr. Jim Bostic, Chairman of the City of Yonkers Violence & Gang Prevention Coalition.

“We must continue our concerted effort as State, federal and local elected officials to work in partnership with community leaders to provide additional outreach, prevention, and intervention resources necessary to enable communities to protect our residents from gangs and illegal guns,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “The dedicated individuals that were in attendance have invaluable knowledge and experience that comes from working with our youth every day to prevent gang violence and illegal drug activity and to expand their horizons and opportunities. It is vitally important they understand that they are not alone.”

“St. John’s regularly treats victims of gang violence and is the largest provider of treatment for drug abuse in the state. We were pleased to participate in the discussion with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins about funding that is available to combat these epidemics in our community and provide input on the best possible programs for intervention and prevention,” said Jim Foy, President and CEO of St. John's Riverside Hospital.

Last April, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced funding she secured from the New York State Senate initiative, “Operation SNUG,” establishing a front-line anti-gun and gang violence prevention effort in the communities hit hardest across the State. The \$4 million program will allow groups to create innovative programs that steer at-risk New Yorkers away from the culture of gangs and illegal drugs. As a result, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins secured \$250,000 of funding for community outreach groups in the City of Yonkers for the resources necessary to keep our children safe and our streets secure.

“The leadership being provided from your respective offices in securing funding for gang prevention and intervention through the Promise Act and the SNUG Initiative will allow communities to make inroads into stemming the growth of gang activity in our community and providing safe and positive options for those who feel that gang affiliation is their only hope and safety net. We must improve our schools and expand education and vocational opportunities. This is the only way that we can break the “cradle to prison pipeline” a path that far too many of our young men and increasingly young women are traveling,” said Shawyn Patterson-Howard, Executive Director of the Yonkers YMCA.

“The 19 shootings in the City of Yonkers this month alone provide more than ample evidence that these problems continue to escalate and require new solutions, like SNUG, that are designed to protect our communities. As the funding decisions are being made in Washington and Albany, it is critical that we combine our efforts to effectively reduce

violence and provide our children with the greatest possible opportunities,” concluded Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.