



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

## Senator Serrano Moderates Caucus Weekend Workshops

[JOSÉ M. SERRANO](#) February 19, 2011

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Senator José M. Serrano moderated two workshops during the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators 40th Annual Caucus Weekend. The first, focused on the challenges many communities face when it comes to accessing health care, and the need for cultural competency training for health care providers. The second workshop, sponsored by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's Office, aimed to identify the major obstacles facing non-profit organizations, and provided suggestions on how to navigate these challenges.

***Health Disparities: The Need for Cultural and Linguistic Competence for Quality Health Care,***

featured doctors from the Bronx and Albany, who discussed the daily challenges they face when interacting with patients. Language barriers, financial obstacles, lack of insurance, immigration status, sexual orientation and cultural differences are among various factors that make access to care a very difficult process for minorities.

S2743/A5185, a Serrano bill, sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Darryl C. Towns, requires cultural competency training for medical professionals. Studies have shown that cultural bias and a lack of knowledge of ethnic cultures exists in New York State, this results in ethnic minority patients being hospitalized longer than usual, with frequent readmissions, frequent medical trips to the ER, and an increased risk of medical errors due to a lack of medical cultural competency.

“The Demographics of New York are changing, and millions of immigrants and communities of color are finding themselves unable to access health care due to language and cultural barriers. Providing quality health care saves lives and reduces costs. The legislation I'm sponsoring aims to create cultural awareness training for medical care providers who have direct interaction with patients, bridging the gap that frequently exists between doctors and

minority patients.” The forum was moderated by Senator Serrano and Assemblyman Towns, and was co-sponsored by the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates Diverse Communities Health Initiative.

Today’s non-profits face more obstacles than ever before. *Key Challenges Facing Non-Profits*, moderated by Senator Serrano and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, featured an expert panel who identified the specific hurdles faced by today’s not-for-profit organizations and gave attendees strategies and resources for meeting their goals. Among the topics discussed by the panel were following rules and laws enforced upon non-profits; working and interacting with a board of directors; collaborating with other non-profits to achieve goals; and possible ways in which the government can streamline the process for distributing grants to non-profits.

Senator Serrano is the sponsor of bill S1681/A855 (co-sponsored by Assemblywoman Sandy Galef), which does away with waste and fraud by establishing a more inclusive and thorough process for vetting non-profit organizations who apply for legislative grants.

“This member item reform bill will ensure that the money distributed gets into the right hands,” said Senator Serrano. “It will particularly benefit smaller, worthy non-profits that are doing fantastic work throughout the State of New York.”

The panel included Jason Lillien, Bureau Chief of the Office of the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau; Nathan Hare, President of the Community Action Organization of Erie County; and Lillian Rodriguez Lopez, President of the Hispanic Federation.

