



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Senate Unanimously Passes Klein Bill Aimed at Fighting Childhood Obesity in High Risk Communities

JEFFREY D. KLEIN June 4, 2013

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ALBANY, NEW YORK – On Monday night, the New York State Senate passed legislation to combat childhood obesity by implementing a wide array of initiatives. These initiatives include: expanding community gardens where fresh produce is grown, kick-starting new obesity programs that encourage schoolchildren to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and launching new services through Cornell University that provide obesity and respiratory disease prevention programs in high risk areas. Additionally, New York State will establish direct marketing campaigns aimed at encouraging children in high-risk neighborhoods to consume healthy foods.

Senate Co-Leader Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) was the bill's prime sponsor in the Senate. Assemblyman Felix Ortiz is the prime sponsor of the legislation in the Assembly, where both legislators anticipate approval within the next two weeks.

Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "The research is clear—nothing poses a greater health risk to our children than obesity. Sadly, Bronx County's obesity rate is well above the New York State average and continues to grow. Making healthy, affordable food options readily available to high-risk communities is the key to reversing this trend. This legislation not only will streamline coordination between state agencies to better address

obesity, but will also create health food marketing campaigns targeted towards at-risk populations. With this bill, we can improve the health outcomes for New Yorkers, both young and old, while also benefiting New York food growers and reducing health care costs in the long run.”

Senator Klein authored this legislation (S.2438) in response to the growing rates of obesity in New York. The prevalence of obesity in adults has increased almost 40% since 2000, reaching a rate of 24.5% among New York adults in 2010. According to the New York State Department of Health, an estimated 32 %, or 1.4 million children are overweight or obese, more than double the number since 2003. Today, 80% of diabetics and 70% of patients with heart disease are obese, contributing to high rates of obesity-related expenses. Poorer and less-educated populations tend to be the most at-risk in New York State.

Senator Klein has worked to combat conditions such as obesity, diabetes, asthma and heart disease locally through programs, awareness campaigns and community initiatives. Earlier this year, Senator Klein joined the Latino Diabetes Awareness campaign that promoted increased awareness through their “Get Informed! Get Tested! Get Healthy!” message throughout Latino communities in the Bronx. Senator Klein also supports the landmark diabetes prevention partnership between the Center of Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) and YMCA of Greater New York, which taught free lifestyle modification techniques to Medicare Fee-for-Service enrollees to reduce their risk for Type II Diabetes.

Senator Klein also successfully advocated for a Teen Health Awareness Campaign Fund in the 2013-14 New York State budget. The campaign focuses on reducing adolescent obesity, educating students about the health consequences of short and long-term alcohol and substance abuse, and raising awareness among young women and health professionals about endometriosis. In the budget, a “check-off box” will appear on all future state income tax forms and will be dedicated to funding health awareness programs in schools addressing,

among other issues, teenage obesity.

Later this year, Senator Klein is planning to partner with local health organizations to offer free weekly classes promoting healthy cooking and physical activity as part of an overall “wellness program,” targeted in high-risk areas of his district.

“In the thirty-nine years that Urban Health Plan has been a part of the Bronx community, obesity has been and continues to be one of the greatest health challenges we face. We are committed to improving access to healthy food and applaud Senator Klein for his leadership in making this possible,” President and CEO of Urban Health Plans Paloma Hernandez said. “Anything that will give members of our community – particularly our children – better tools to adopt healthy eating habits is critical to combating obesity in the Bronx and across New York.”

Angela Tovar of Community Greening Planner of Sustainable South Bronx said, “Working with communities in the Bronx to improve the day-to-day quality of life, I commend Senator Klein for identifying common sense solutions to the serious threat of obesity in high-risk areas, while promoting local produce and the cultivation of community gardens. I believe that this legislation offers a multifaceted approach to boosting access to local produce that will undoubtedly kick off a significant decline in obesity and other public health issues that threaten our communities.”

Pastor Gloria Amos Green at Shout for Joy Baptist Church said, “Running a local food pantry in conjunction with our church and seeing the daily needs and concerns in our community has highlighted the importance of access to fresh, affordable local produce. Increasing the availability of fresh produce to areas with high rates of obesity, diabetes and other lifestyle conditions will have a profound impact on the overall health of children and the community at large. I thank Senator Klein for taking the lead in improving access and awareness to

healthy foods as a way of combating obesity.”

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