



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Pushes for Vital Afterschool Expansion in Final Budget Plan

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 21, 2014

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***Funding for Statewide Afterschool Expansion Plans Put in Jeopardy during Budget Negotiations.***

***With Budget Deadline Days Away, Kennedy Calls for Final Budget to Include \$160 Million to Meet Urgent Need to Expand Access to Afterschool Programs in WNY and across the State.***

***Kennedy: Thousands of Hardworking Families in WNY Desperately Need Access to Afterschool Programs to Help their Children Achieve their Greatest Potential.***

BUFFALO, N.Y. – With the March 31 budget deadline rapidly approaching, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, today visited the Babcock Clubhouse, a chapter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo, to outline an urgent educational need that he believes should be prioritized in this year's budget. Kennedy is calling for \$160 million to be included in the final budget plan to expand access to afterschool programs in Western New York and across the state. With over 1 million children in New York State still waiting for access to afterschool programs, Kennedy wants the state to firmly commit to a multi-year plan for the expansion of afterschool programs statewide, which will help children achieve their greatest potentials and keep neighborhoods safe.

“Our region is home to several very high-quality afterschool providers, but still thousands of hardworking families in Buffalo and Western New York desperately need access to afterschool programs to help their children achieve their greatest potential. Local children and families will directly benefit if the state finally takes steps to dramatically expand afterschool programs,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “It is critically urgent that New York State provide our communities with the necessary funding to ensure every single child has access to the high-quality afterschool programs they need to strengthen their future.”

Over the course of this year's budget process, Senator Kennedy and other state leaders have identified afterschool expansion as a priority for the state budget. However, funding for statewide afterschool expansion is now at risk of being removed from the final budget plan.

In his executive budget proposal, Governor Cuomo put forward a five-year afterschool expansion plan that would provide access to at least 100,000 more children at the start of the 2015-16 school year. The Governor's proposal allocates \$160 million in each of the five years of the plan. However, in the Senate and Assembly budget resolutions, the legislative leaders made some changes that could negatively impact afterschool expansion in Western New York.

The Assembly Majority kept much of the Governor's proposal, but amended it so that only some portion of the funds would go to afterschool, likely not the full \$160 million needed. The Senate Majority Coalition proposed \$200 million for programs in New York City, but nothing for the rest of the state. They essentially rejected the Governor's proposal, and put Upstate and Western New York at risk of being cut out of afterschool expansion plans entirely.

At the Babcock Clubhouse today, Kennedy called on the Senate and Assembly to join with the Governor to provide at least \$160 million to expand afterschool programs across the entire state. Kennedy wants the Legislature to agree to the urgently needed five-year afterschool expansion plan.

"We need to expand afterschool programs statewide, and Western New York must be included in the effort" Kennedy said. "This investment will make a huge difference in the lives of thousands of children, and it will improve the quality of life for families here in Western New York and across the state."

**Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Executive Director of the New York State Afterschool Network**, said "Buffalo's high quality afterschool programs show the impact that these opportunities can have on children, families, and schools. The final state budget must address the need for afterschool programs statewide so that children all across New York can benefit from opportunities to receive academic support, explore new interests and develop healthy relationships – and parents across the state can have the security of knowing their children are safe and learning in the hours before they get home from work."

**Michael Weiner, president and CEO of the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County**, said, "Many children in Buffalo and Erie County have access to quality afterschool programs, but many more do not. It is essential that New York State provide additional funding to help expand

afterschool offerings which will help close the achievement gap by providing children with necessary educational opportunities. We're proud to join Senator Kennedy in taking a stand on the importance of afterschool expansion statewide."

**Diane L. Rowe, chief professional officer at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Buffalo**, said, "Providing high-quality afterschool programming is a critical educational need throughout Buffalo and Western New York. If the state were to make this \$160 million investment in afterschool expansion, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo and other local afterschool providers would be able to increase our capacity and help more children take advantage of our program offerings. We want to thank Senator Kennedy for recognizing the immense importance of providing afterschool programs for local children."

Without access to quality afterschool programs, many families are often forced to choose between the safety of their children or securing employment. This puts children at risk and negatively affects the stability of our workforce. Research also indicates that afterschool programs have proven to help close the achievement gap for low-income children and instill positive attitudes that lead to success as young adults and throughout life.

They provide youth with productive activities and learning opportunities to participate in after they leave school. High-quality afterschool programs keep young people engaged and keep them off the streets. This leads to improved student achievement among low-income youth and reduced criminal activity and drug abuse.

Investing in afterschool also provides a substantial return for taxpayers. It's been estimated that every dollar invested in afterschool programs saves taxpayers about \$3, according to a study by the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College. The study further indicates that every dollar invested in an at-risk youth saves \$8 to \$12, when benefits from reduction in crime are factored in.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*