



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas P. Morahan

The Federal Government To Restore Drug Prevention Funding

THOMAS P. MORAHAN February 1, 2010

I am very concerned to learn that the federal government has decided to cut a total of \$18 million in federal aid aimed at creating safe, drug-free schools across New York State. As Chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, I have direct oversight of the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OASAS).

Through its Bureau of Prevention, OASAS leads New York State's efforts in preventing alcohol and other drug problems. These very successful efforts have included the development, implementation, and maintenance of policies, resources and services in the areas of prevention. Their very successful efforts have been achieved by working in partnership with key policymakers, the provider network, individuals, families and communities to create and promote a framework that supports safe and healthy environments. This is a framework that has evolved to date, which is both comprehensive and research-based.

The actual delivery of prevention services in New York state is affected through a system consisting of some 230 providers, operating in a variety of settings, including 2,000 school-based locations, statewide. These providers deliver a wide range of services including classroom presentations, skills development workshops, training sessions for parents and teachers, and positive alternative activities for youth. This important work needs to continue.

I am calling on President Obama's administration to rethink their recently announced decision to cut this important aid, especially in light of the staggering increase in the number of heroin-related arrests and overdoses in our state.

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 President Obama's administrators 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.

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.