



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anthony H. Palumbo

Senator Palumbo Fights to Restore North Fork Mental Health Initiative Funding

ANTHONY H. PALUMBO February 15, 2021

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Senator Anthony Palumbo (R,C-New Suffolk) is working to restore the North Fork Mental Health Initiative funding in the State Budget and secure \$250,000 in enhanced state funding for the important program in this year's State Budget. Before the initiative's funding was cut from last year's State Budget, North Fork Mental Health Coalition brought together all the school districts on the North Fork (Oysterponds, Greenport, Southold, New Suffolk. Shelter

Island, Mattituck and Riverhead) state and local governments to address the issue of suicide and mental health challenges for North Fork students.

Senator Palumbo noted that these are small districts do not have the individual resources to combat these challenges on their own. In the past, the State, school districts, and local governments on the East End put money towards the coalition making it truly a collaborative effort to help the region's youth.

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“COVID-19 has placed tremendous stress on our students and families who have been greatly impacted by the increase in social isolation, which is having a serious impact on the mental health and wellbeing of countless students,” said Senator Palumbo. “The State Legislature must reestablish the North Fork Mental Health Initiative funding in the State Budget and provide additional state aid to help fund this collaborative and extremely important initiative for North Fork students and families.”

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“Now more than ever, the mental health and well-being of our children must be protected. With the additional stresses brought about by COVID-19, the lack of much needed socialization, and the disruptions to their daily school and family lives, our teens need all the support we can provide them. I join with Senator Palumbo in calling for the restoration of state funding for the North Fork Mental Health Initiative, and will continue to fight in Albany to see that our students have the resources they need to thrive in these difficult times,” said Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio.

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"Since I started to push for the North Fork Initiative in 2017, it has made a world of difference in our schools and the community as a whole. It was a huge shock when the program lost its funding," said Denis Noncarrow, Southold Town Government Liaison Officer. "Thankfully, Family Service League has done what they could to continue with the services they provide. I have also submitted for additional funding through The Community Development Block Grant. I'm waiting for that approval to come through soon."

Senator Palumbo noted that prior to the establishment of the North Fork Mental Health Initiative, a student in crisis, potentially from as far away as Orient Point, could be sent to CPEP at Stony Brook Hospital, the designated Psychiatric Center. This trip, usually in a police car, could be as long as an hour and half one-way. Additionally, upon returning to the classroom, oftentimes there would be no follow up plan or available counseling.

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"The success of this program in the past has been truly phenomenal," said Senator Palumbo. "Now, as our communities and youth continue to face the additional stresses of COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of greater isolation and a loss of extracurricular activities, it is critically important to restore the North Fork Mental Health Initiative and provide enhanced state funding of \$250,000 to provide help to those students most in need on the North Fork of Long Island."