



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

State Senator Malcolm Smith Votes For Override To Increase Funds For School-based Health Centers

MALCOLM A. SMITH May 1, 2006



State Senator Malcolm Smith (D-Queens) today voted to override the Governor's veto of \$3.4 million to fund New York's school-based Health Centers. SBHCs provide on-site primary care and mental health services, serving over 200,000 students in the highest-need areas of the state.

"Without a doubt, school-based health centers have proven to be one of the most effective programs in New York's public health care system," said Senator Smith. "My Senate

colleagues and I fought hard this year, like we do every year, to increase funding for these exemplary health clinics. We know that school-based care is the only source of health care for many of our most vulnerable young people."

The Senator said there are nearly 200 school-based Health Centers in New York State, which provide a full range of prevention and intervention services, including diagnosis and monitoring of chronic diseases, like asthma and diabetes, treatment of minor and major illnesses, and crisis intervention. Parents strongly support the centers, located in some of the poorest neighborhoods of the state. What's more, students with access to SBHCs are less likely to be absent from class and more likely to graduate.

"Look at the facts: SBHCs have been shown to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, reduce emergency room visits, and improve school attendance. Last year, for instance, SBHCs saved the State \$3 million in hospital inpatient costs alone for children with asthma. These Health Centers are on the front line for kids' health, designed to bring readily-accessible health care services to the students, not vice versa," said Senator Smith.

The Queens lawmaker noted that the Governor's budget proposal of \$23 million does not keep pace with the growing number of children served by the popular program. In the last eight years, he noted, the number of Centers statewide has increased by 28 percent and student clinic visits surged by a whopping 85 percent. Yet despite their proven effectiveness, seven school-based clinics were forced to close their doors last year due to insufficient funding.

"This year, it's expected that 60 new Centers will apply for funding," Senator Smith said. "Hopefully, some of these new Centers can open without forcing major cut backs, even closures, at existing ones."

"It goes without saying that healthy students are better students. I am proud that my colleagues and I could add funds to restore the health of this remarkable program, even though this amount falls short of the \$15 million advocates hoped to receive. If ever there was a safety net for poor, underserved kids, this is it," concluded Senator Smith.
