



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Frank Padavan

## Padavan: Higher Education Remains A Priority In New Legislative Session

FRANK PADAVAN February 2, 2009

New York State Senator Frank Padavan (Queens) today reaffirmed his strong commitment to ensuring all New Yorkers have access to a quality and affordable higher education.

Padavan, a long-time and strong advocate of expanding high education in New York, called investing in higher education a fundamental priority during this legislative session.

“At a time when our economy is facing the most serious challenges since the Great Depression, we must do everything we can to preserve, protect and expand upon the standard of higher education in our community and throughout the state,” Padavan said.

“It’s vital to our economic future that every New Yorker can access a quality and affordable higher education that will build upon their foundation and strengthen New York’s workforce.”

Padavan also expressed his opposition and deep concern over the scheduled increase in tuition of \$600 for the Fall 2009 semester for the City University of New York (CUNY). The scheduled increase will raise undergraduate for residents tuition from \$4,000 to \$4,600.

“Over 9,000 students in the 11th Senate District attend a CUNY school either here in our community or throughout New York City,” Padavan said. “The increase slated for the upcoming fall semester places an unfair burden on countless families and students

throughout our community at a time when they are all finding it difficult to make ends meet. With state budget negotiations ongoing, it's important for all legislative leaders to take action that will eliminate this onerous tuition increase at CUNY and SUNY as well."

The pain of tuition increases isn't just isolated to the CUNY system. Recently, the State University of New York (SUNY) approved a \$310 tuition increase for the Spring 2009 semester increasing resident undergraduate tuition to \$4,660 annually. In the recently adopted Deficit Reduction Package structured by Governor Paterson and the legislative majorities, the \$310 per student tuition increase was raided and will be used for the state General Fund. Only \$7.6 million of a total \$68.5 million of the tuition increase will actually go to services for SUNY students.

"The action choreographed by the Governor, the Speaker and the Senate Majority leader in secret is a dangerous precedent that robs SUNY students and their families of hard-earned tuition dollars and only sets the course for further tuition increase in the near future," Padavan said. "I hope this fiscal scheme is not a foreshadowing of the budget process as we move forward."

Over the years, Senator Padavan has been at the forefront fighting on behalf of students and families in relation to higher education issues. As a key sponsor of the legislation establishing the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), Padavan has fought to protect and invest in the important state financial aid program. TAP has been instrumental in helping countless low to moderate income students in New York pursue a higher education.

Governor Paterson proposes a number of proposals as a part of his 2009-2010 Executive Budget that will significantly lessen the impact TAP awards have on individual students. These proposals included increasing the TAP full-time eligibility threshold to 15 credit hours,

including public pension income in award determinations, and the elimination of TAP award enhancements for multiple family member. Governor Paterson is also calling for the complete elimination of Tap awards for graduate studies.

In maintaining his commitment to the TAP program, Padavan will re-introduce legislation that will allow a TAP recipient to apply for an adjustment to their award based on a change in financial status due to income loss in relation to extenuating circumstance. These circumstances include an involuntary change in employment status, divorce or separation, catastrophic illness, permanent or temporary disability, or a call to military service of the applicant, the applicant's spouse, parent or legal guardian. The legislation passed both houses of the state Legislature during the 2008 Legislative Session, but was ultimately vetoed by Governor Paterson.

"With layoffs adversely impacting so many families throughout New York, my legislation will provide additional TAP aid and help college students further pursue their studies. Given the economic conditions we face, I am hopeful that this important bill that will help so many families and students will once again pass during this legislative session and signed into law by Governor Paterson. Instead of watering down TAP eligibility as Governor Paterson proposed in his Executive Budget we must strength and expand eligibility and this legislation is a step in the right direction." Padavan concluded.