## Senator Rivera Passes His First Bill as State Senator

GUSTAVO RIVERA   June 21, 2011

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New York, NY – Senator Gustavo Rivera (D,WF-Bronx) passed legislation today in the New York State that will allow charitable organizations to post bail. This legislation he introduced was inspired by a pilot program that set out to find a solution for individuals who cannot afford to post bail and has proved successful in Bronx county.

"Thousands of New Yorkers are held in jail each year because they simply cannot afford to post a few hundred dollars bail," said Senator Rivera. "Every day, people plead guilty to crimes, regardless of guilt, because they can't afford bail and just want to return home to their families and avoid time spent in jail. For individuals like the residents of the 33rd Senate District that I represent, even just a few days of incarceration can have devastating consequences: job loss, eviction, and for non-citizens, deportation."

"For far too long, the poorest of the poor have been held in jail without a conviction for any crime because they couldn't afford even small amounts of bail," said David Feige of the Bronx Freedom Fund. "Allowing charitable organizations like the Bronx Freedom Fund to post that bail is a giant step towards evening the scales and recognizing that pretrial justice shouldn't be about the size of your wallet."

"We thank and congratulate Senator Rivera for his tremendous leadership on legislation whose positive impact will be felt not only by thousands of Bronx residents but throughout New York State," said Robin Steinberg, Executive Director, The Bronx Defenders.

S. 5734A is based on a pilot project in the Bronx where a fund called the Bronx Freedom Fund was created to allow charitable organizations to post small amount of bail for individuals who could not afford it. The result was that 95% of people bailed out returned to every court date, and 50% of clients had their cases dismissed or had cases not result in criminal convictions. This legislation was also passed in the Assembly, where it was brought to the floor by Assembly Member Jeff Aubry (D-Queens )passed A. 8158 in the State Assembly by 145 to 0.