



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Senator Malcolm A. Smith Holds Hearing on Summer Youth Employment

MALCOLM A. SMITH March 12, 2013

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(Albany, NY)-Senator Malcolm A. Smith, the chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Social Services, sponsored a public hearing on the Future of Youth Development / Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) and the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Also overseeing the meeting were Sen. James Sanders Jr. and Sen. Jack Martins.

Testimony was given by several city and state representatives who cited the importance of the programs touting how they give youngsters a sense of responsibility, purpose and pride. They also voiced concerns that increasing the minimum wage, as proposed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, would reduce the availability of space for potential participants.

If the minimum wage goes up, representatives from the city's Department of Youth and Community Development estimate that they will need an additional \$10 million dollars to compensate for the loss in

funds paying higher salaries will cause, bringing their total budget to \$35 million. That figure is based on the present citywide number of slots, which is 23,000.

“This funding would be well spent, considering that last summer 75 percent of our participants indicated that they would not have a job without Summer Youth Employment Program,” said Jeanne Mullgrav, commissioner of the city’s Department of Youth and Community Development. “Additionally a recent report by NYU demonstrated that Summer Youth Employment Program improves school attendance and achievement.”

The youth employment slots are filled by lottery which takes into account both population and poverty levels, Mullgrav said. The average participant works 25 hours per week. They also attend educational workshops to help prepare them to be part of the workforce when they get older.

“It is a tremendous opportunity to have that first job, to get into the workforce, to have that moment of pride in what you can accomplish, to be able to be helpful to someone else,” said Dr. Nora Niedzielski-Eichner of the New York State Afterschool Network.

Also testifying at the hearing were: Andrew Miller, Assistant Commissioner of the New York City Youth and Community Development, Jackie Negri, Executive Director of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus, Kevin Douglas of the Rockaway Development Revitalization Corp. and Dr. Amy Ellen Schwartz of the Institute for Education and Social Policy at NYU.

“We wanted to highlight the significance of increasing the minimum wage, which we support, but we also wanted to highlight the impact that would have on the lack of slots,” Smith said. “We don’t want to look through a one-way mirror and say ‘We’ll give you money for the minimum wage, period,’ and then feel like we’ve done our job. We also have to think about the impact it will have on these important programs and compensate with additional funding where appropriate.”