



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Simcha Felder

Felder's Workshop Highlights Success of Transportation Law

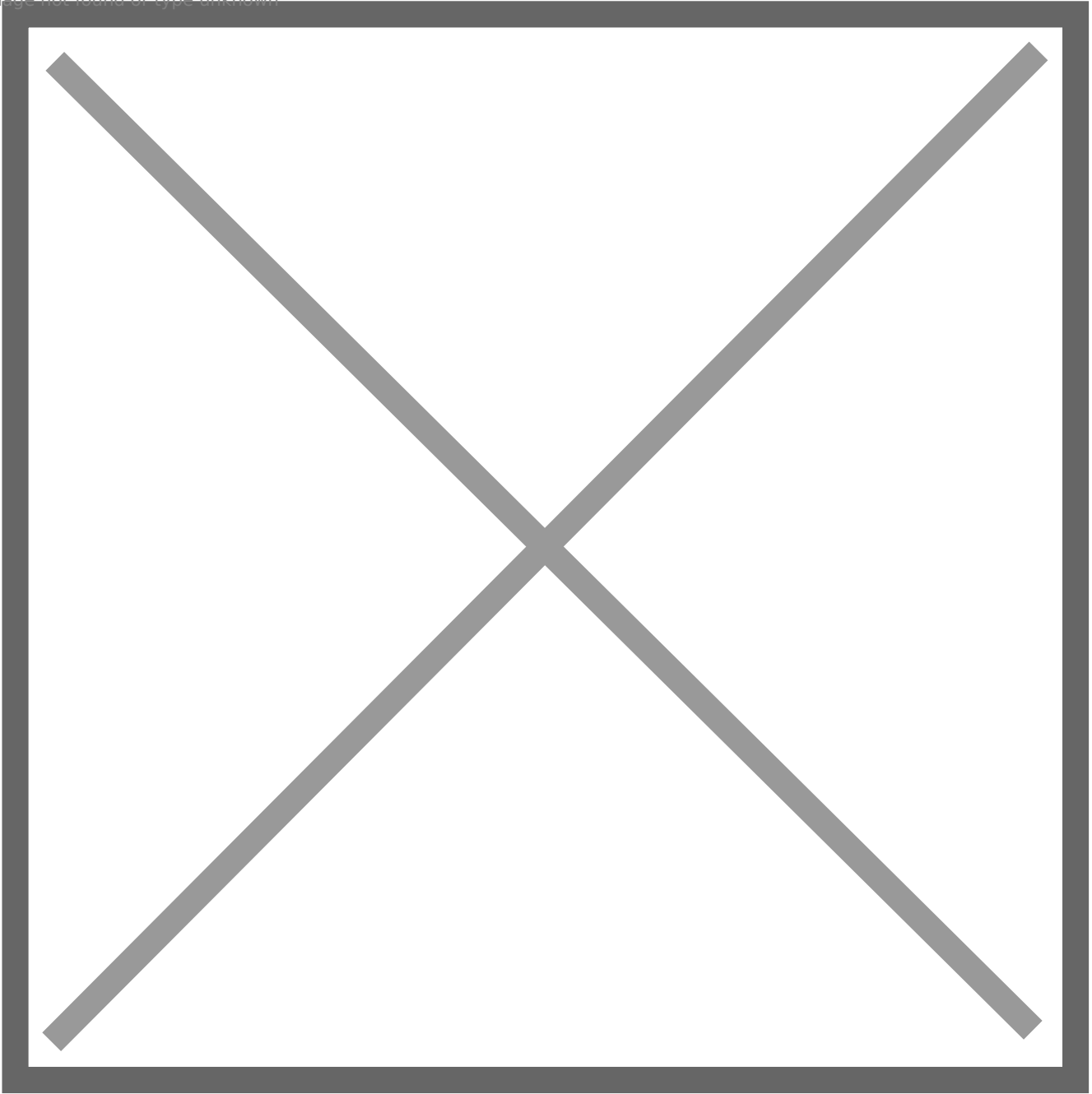
Simcha Felder

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As his after 4 P.M. school bus program enters its second year, Senator Simcha Felder (D-Brooklyn) took time last week at a workshop for non-public schools to reflect on the continued success of the transportation law he sponsored, and to discuss how the State's education budget impacts the non-public school community.

Some 70 schools from across the five boroughs attended the meeting, which was held at Ateres Chaya Hall in Borough Park on Thursday, May 15. The group also heard remarks from Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein (D-Brooklyn), who co-

sponsored the legislation in the Assembly, and from Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Brooklyn).

Last March, the New York State Legislature passed Senator Felder's historic legislation, which provides an increased level of safety and protection for New York City children in grades K-6. Under the new law, any public, private or parochial school that holds academic classes from 9:30 A.M. or earlier until 4:00 P.M. or later, is now eligible to receive pick-up and drop-off bus service within 600 feet of the child's home.

"When I first took office, I promised to address school transportation concerns for our families, and today, I am proud to say that with Hashem's help, we were successful," Felder said in his address. "My legislation has managed to both protect our children who attend school after 4 P.M., and put money back in the pockets of hard-working parents. Today, already financially-strapped parents no longer have to worry how they will afford to bring their children home from school."

Felder estimates that parents of non-public school children have saved an average of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per child since the transportation law was implemented.

An initial allocation of \$12 million had been earmarked for this initiative, but owing to the program's popularity, a total of \$23 million in permanent funding has been made available. This means there will be no out-of-pocket cost to parents or concern about how the program will be funded in future years.

"As Chair of the New York City Education Subcommittee, getting this legislation passed was not only a matter of safety for me, but of equity," Felder continued. "For far too long, the City and State had denied our children bus service even though it would have cost the City millions of dollars more if all of our children attended public schools. My legislation has resulted in direct savings to parents and yeshivos."

Senator Felder also addressed the issue of the education tax credit bill he is championing, saying that yeshivos as a whole would have received \$75 million in funding in the first year had the tax credit been implemented. That number increases to \$113 million and \$150 million in the second and third years respectively under the tax credit proposal.

"There's still a glimmer of hope that we may get the education tax credit bill passed before the end of session," said Felder. "I will continue to fight until the tax credit is

signed into law, and tuition-paying families get some of the relief they deserve. And with G-d's help, we will succeed," he vowed.

Following the Senator's remarks, the transportation workshop was conducted by Mr. Eric Goldstein, Chief Executive of the Office of School Support Services for the New York City Department of Education. Ms. Alexandra Robinson, Executive Director of the Office of Pupil Transportation, explained the reimbursement process and answered questions from the participants pertaining to issues of relocation, bus monitors, and proper protocol for completing the forms.

"Once again our Senator has been at the forefront in addressing the needs of the community and maintaining the attitude that our children are our number one concern," said Rabbi Gavriel Celnik, associate dean of Masores Bais Yaakov in Midwood, following the presentation.

Those with questions about the busing program are urged to contact the Office of Senator Felder by phone at [718-253-2015](tel:718-253-2015) or via e-mail at felder@nysenate.gov.