



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Senate Passes Bill Co-Sponsored by Addabbo to Require More Public Notice and Input WITH Siting of Homeless Shelters and Other Social Service Facilities

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR June 2, 2015

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Queens, NY (June 1, 2015): NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. applauded the recent Senate approval of legislation (S.4542) he co-sponsors, introduced by Sen. Jeff Klein, that would require a far more transparent and inclusive process – with greater public notification – when homeless shelters or other social services facilities are being located in communities throughout New York City.

“This legislation, while not avoiding or ignoring the crisis of homelessness, substance abuse, or other serious social ills in our society, does provide a necessary means for community members to be fully involved from the get-go when homeless shelters or other social service facilities are planned for their neighborhoods,” said Addabbo. “All too often, communities are finding that facilities are being virtually rammed down their throats, with no real thought given to whether the buildings are appropriate for the programs, whether the neighborhoods have adequate transit or other services, or whether the proposed operators have questionable track records that should be challenged.”

Under the legislation, social service providers – including those operating supportive housing

for the homeless – would be required to notify community boards and the City Planning Commission (CPC) within 45 to 90 days of selecting a location for a facility. The CPC would then be required to hold public hearings to gather local input on the proposed facilities, and this agency would also have the final authority, within 60 to 90 days following the hearings, to approve, deny, or modify the community-based programs. Community boards may also request that hearings be held within the same time frame if a provider is planning to renew its lease – permitting local input in instances where questions have been raised about the operations of the facility.

“The fact of the matter is that we need transparency, honesty and in-depth community conversations about these programs – before they happen, not after the fact,” said Addabbo, pointing to the ongoing controversy about the proposed homeless shelter planned for Cooper Avenue in Glendale. “This project appeared virtually out of thin air, with no opportunity for the community to raise legitimate concerns about the facility, the track record of the operators, or other very pertinent issues – which then fell on deaf ears when brought to the attention of City officials. We can’t let this continue to happen. It’s not about trying to keep people in need out of our neighborhoods – it’s about bringing neighborhoods together, with all the information they require, to help determine the best outcomes for these same people in need.”

The Senate passage of the legislation, was also noted by Dawn Scala, of the Glendale/Middle Village Coalition that has been challenging the Cooper Avenue facility and asking for a much more comprehensive environmental review of the program. “Critical to ensuring the success of a homeless shelter in any neighborhood is to make sure the community is not ignored in the sitting process, and providing full transparency and open and honest dialogue at the very beginning and throughout the process,” Dawn said.

“I know constituents in my community in the Bronx are fed up with being a dumping ground for shelters due to a lack of foresight and planning for this population. Usually, communities are surprised when shelters or other social service facilities pop up in the neighborhood and this lack of transparency needs to end. Communities deserve notification and to have a say in what’s happening in the neighborhoods they care about,” said Senator Klein.

The bill is now under consideration by the Assembly Committee on Cities.

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