



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward Bill Would Mean Mandate Relief for SUNY Communities

JEFF BISHOP, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR October 26, 2015

| ISSUE: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PROPERTY TAX**



ONEONTA, 10/26/15 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) joined officials in Cortland and Oneonta in recent days to detail his legislation (S.4643) that would provide New York State aid to SUNY host communities to help offset public safety costs.

“Our SUNY schools open doors for young students and are a driving force for local economies, however, there is also a real financial cost for hometown taxpayers,” said Senator Seward. **“My legislation will provide mandate relief for SUNY host communities by shifting a portion of the police, fire, and code enforcement burden away from local taxpayers.”**

Significant student populations present several public policy challenges for local governments, one of which is providing adequate public safety services to both students and the public while striking the appropriate balance between other municipal needs and available resources.

“As local government officials contend with rising costs and work to stay within the property tax cap, the state needs to move forward with genuine mandate relief measures. This legislation would help accomplish that goal for SUNY communities and will be a leading priority of mine in 2016,” Seward added.

Senator Seward’s legislation would provide “impact aid” to municipalities hosting four-year State University of New York (SUNY) residential schools, colleges, and universities.

Along with making this legislation a top priority for the next legislative session, Senator Seward has also called on Governor Cuomo to include the proposal in his 2016-17 executive budget.

City of Oneonta Mayor Gary Herzig said, “The benefits SUNY Oneonta offers our community cannot be overstated, however there are public safety costs and other municipal expenses associated with the campus that city taxpayers are forced to shoulder. Senator Seward’s “impact aid” bill is a positive initiative that would provide tangible financial relief to the city for these unavoidable costs.”

City of Cortland Mayor Brian Tobin said, “SUNY Cortland is a great partner and a true community asset, however the associated public safety costs that come with hosting the school are something that must be taken into consideration when preparing our local budget. Senator Seward’s legislation would provide significant property tax relief and help as we work to stay within the confines of the property tax cap.”

City of Oneonta Acting City Manager Meg Hungerford said, “Senator Seward’s legislation would help offset the costs that come with making certain students and staff at SUNY Oneonta are safe. Everyone at city hall is working hard to keep our city budget from eclipsing the property tax cap, while continuing to provide essential services. Strategies like this could make the difference.”

City of Cortland Administration and Finance Director Mack Cook said, “Senator Seward’s “impact aid” bill would mean tax savings for Cortland property owners and would also allow us to budget for other community needs like road repairs or parks – definitely a win-win.”

City of Cortland Fourth Ward Alderman John Bennett Jr. said, “Having discussed this issue with Senator Seward, I know he is fully aware that SUNY Cortland, while a blessing, does mean added costs for city taxpayers. This legislation will bring much needed help to Cortland.”

City of Oneonta Second Ward Alderman Dr. Laurence Malone, who is also a professor of economics at Hartwick College, has conducted substantial research on the topic of small cities revenue in upstate New York and says, “Small cities like Oneonta with significant college populations are forced to spend a great deal on public safety, an expenditure non-college towns are not faced with. Over the last four decades, revenue has decreased for a variety of reasons, add in the property tax cap and we are at our breaking point. Senator Seward’s proposal will help mitigate these fiscal challenges here and in other college communities.”

New York Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) Executive Director Peter Baynes said, “Although our local officials clearly recognize the economic benefits that SUNY brings to their municipalities, these same local governments are also faced with additional fiscal, public safety and quality of life issues as a result of being a college community. Not only are there

additional costs due to the increase in student population and the need for additional services, but there are similar pressures placed on the revenue side of the budget, largely due to the fact that all of the properties affiliated with the colleges are tax exempt. This, in conjunction with the property tax cap, makes it increasingly difficult for college communities to finance the essential municipal services their residents -- and students -- need and expect. Senator Seward's bill would provide a much-needed source of revenue to those local governments that host four-year SUNY residential institutions, and would help to promote the safety of the students while improving the quality of life in these communities.”

Companion legislation (A.6416) has been introduced in the state assembly by Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2015-S4643

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Provides state aid to municipalities to offset the costs and expenses of providing public safety services that are necessary as a result of the presence of a residential institution located in such municipality

April 01, 2015

In Senate Committee **Finance**

Sponsored by **James L. Seward**

Do you support this bill?