



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

BILL TO PROVIDE MAJOR UNFUNDED MANDATE RELIEF CLEARS SENATE

SUSAN SERINO June 16, 2016

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ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) today announced that legislation she co-sponsors to provide major unfunded mandate relief to the local community and make justice a priority passed in the Senate. The bill will shift the costs of funding indigent legal services from New York’s counties, to the state in an effort to improve quality and relieve local taxpayers of an excessive burden.

“As I said in January in calling for the passage of this landmark legislation, unfunded mandates are crippling our localities and the burden of covering those costs is falling on the shoulders of local taxpayers,” said Senator Serino. “This particular mandate costs our local communities over \$4 million each and every year. That’s no small tab. Lifting this burden is a huge win for local taxpayers, it’s a win for our counties and it’s a win for justice—ensuring that those in need of indigent legal services have the representation they need.”

Currently, federal mandate requires counties across the state to be responsible for funding indigent legal services. However, the quality of each county’s program is dependent on the individual county’s ability to fund the program which often results in disparity and varying standards of quality in services. The bill (S. 8114) aims to improve quality and relieve counties of the financial burden of providing indigent legal services by requiring the state to take over

full funding of the program after 2022.

Recently the state settled a lawsuit with five upstate counties that requires the Office of Indigent Legal Services to take over the public defense operations in those communities, marking the first time that the state will be responsible for those services.

Both County Executive Marcus Molinaro of Dutchess and MaryEllen Odell of Putnam traveled to Albany earlier this year to push for the passage of this monumental legislation.

Dutchess County Executive, Marcus Molinaro, said, “Today, Senator Sue Serino and the State Senate delivered meaningful, statewide mandate relief for counties across New York State. Bill No. S.6341B, co-sponsored by Senator Serino and our entire legislative delegation, will provide state funding for constitutionally protected legal defense for those in need of these services while saving Dutchess County taxpayers close to \$4 million a year. I am glad we led the fight for this important legislation and did not waiver-property taxpayers and defendants in need all across the state will benefit from the passing of this legislation.”

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell, said, “Indigent defense services currently costs Putnam County over a \$1 million a year. Putnam County believes in providing the best legal counsel for our residents, but the only way we can do that is if the state takes responsibility so that the burden does not fall solely on our local taxpayers. Transitioning the financial burden from county governments to the state provides some much needed mandate relief to the local municipalities and its taxpayers and we are grateful to local legislative representative, Senator Sue Serino and Terrence Murphy for continuing to push for this legislation. We recognize that this was a heavy lift and we are especially grateful to NYSAC Executive Director Steve Acquario, County Executive Dan McCoy of Albany and the bill’s sponsors Senator John DeFrancisco and Assemblywoman Pat Fahy for their commitment to the passage of this bill.”

The bill has been sent to the Assembly where it is expected to pass.