



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Stands With WNY Leadership to Send Strong Message to Albany: If You Don't Vote For Buffalo, You Don't Have My Vote

[Timothy M. Kennedy](#)

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ISSUE:

- [Buffalo Billion](#)
- [Buffalo](#)



As State Budget Negotiations Begin, Kennedy Stands with Chiefs of NFTA, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, UB Medical School, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, 43North, Say Yes Buffalo and Others to Demand Second Round of Buffalo Billion Funding Be Included in Final Budget

Kennedy Says He'll Withhold His Vote if a Final Budget Doesn't Include the \$500 Million Earmarked for Buffalo Billion Phase II; Underscores Critical Follow-Up to Initial State Investment in Western New York

BUFFALO, NY – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) joined nearly a dozen members of Buffalo's leading business and community driven organizations today to demand that Phase II of Buffalo Billion funding be included in the 2017-2018 final state budget. If excluded from a final financial plan, Kennedy warned that the momentum Western New York has seen as a result of the first Buffalo Billion investment could come to a halt, leaving the region once again struggling to gain economic stability. Kennedy released a letter he has sent to Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, Assembly Majority Leader Carl Heastie and Governor Andrew Cuomo, emphasizing the transformation Buffalo has seen through the first round of funding, and threatening to withhold his vote for a final budget that fails to include this critical funding for Buffalo.

Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus President Matt Enstice, University at Buffalo Medical School Dean Michael Cain, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Executive Director Kim Minkel, Buffalo Niagara Partnership President & CEO Dottie

Gallagher-Cohen, Say Yes Buffalo Executive Director David Rust, 43North Board Chair Bill Maggio, Visit Buffalo Niagara President & CEO Patrick Kaler, University District Community Development Association's Darren Cotton, Community Action Organization Executive Director L. Nate Hare, Fruit Belt Coalition President Dr. Benjamin Cashaw, and Citizens for Regional Transit President Doug Funke all echoed Kennedy's call, each underscoring initiatives within the proposed BBII funding that would help their respective organizations and fields.

"Before the Buffalo Billion, Western New York was stuck in neutral," said Senator Kennedy. "Major investments including SolarCity/Tesla and the Better Buffalo Fund have injected our region with a new vigor and vitality that hasn't been seen for decades. Failing to include funding for the Buffalo Billion Phase II in the budget would be a dereliction of our duty as a Legislature, and would be detrimental consequences for the Buffalo economy. After decades of neglect by New York State, Buffalo is finally turning the corner. As a Western New Yorker who hopes to see his children raise their own families here, I cannot, and will not, support a budget that does not include this funding."

"The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus has experienced exceptional growth over the past several years, and we are excited at the potential for continued success under Governor Cuomo's Buffalo Billion Squared proposal," said Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus President & CEO Matt Enstice. "The Governor's proposed \$40 million in funding for the Innovation HUB will be a game-changer for the Medical Campus as we attract companies to Buffalo and support and grow the start-up companies spinning out of our institutions. The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus joins Senator Kennedy in enthusiastically supporting the Buffalo Billion Squared plan."

"An important commitment of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences is to increase the class size from 144 to 180 students," said Dean of the University at Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Dr. Michael E. Cain. "This 25% expansion in the number of medical student graduates each year will increase the number of physicians practicing in Western New York. Achievement of this goal requires both new educational facilities and, as mandated by the country's medical school accrediting body, a proportional growth in the School's programs and faculty. The \$20M in the Buffalo Billion Squared initiative slated for the medical school is essential for the School to expand and transform its educational, research, and clinical programs; thereby assuring that each additional student has the same outstanding education and mentored learning experiences

afforded to our currently enrolled trainees. This investment also catalyzes continued growth and attraction of public-private partnerships in biomedical research.”

“Governor Cuomo’s Buffalo Billion Phase 2 proposal is a game changer for public transit in Western New York,” said NFTA Executive Director Kim Minkel. The governor’s pledge to support Metro Rail extension to the Northtowns and the DL&W Terminal with \$25 million in Buffalo Billion Phase 2 funds will enable NFTA-Metro to further pursue hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding that would otherwise not be available to the region. Funding from the Buffalo Billion Phase 2 would also unlock the potential for billions of dollars in private sector investment, new jobs, and increased access to employment, healthcare, education, entertainment, and retail via transit. Thanks to Governor Cuomo’s leadership and Senator Kennedy’s strong, ongoing support of public transit and advocacy on behalf of his constituents, Western New York has an opportunity for continued revitalization and growth that few predicted a couple of years ago.”

“The Buffalo Niagara Partnership applauds Governor Cuomo and members of the Western New York legislative delegation for their ongoing commitment to Upstate, especially Buffalo Niagara and the creation of Buffalo Billion 2,” said Dottie Gallagher-Cohen, President & CEO of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. “This plan will continue the undeniable momentum created under the original Buffalo Billion and provide strategic investment throughout our region for several key projects and initiatives.”

“The allocations from Buffalo Billion II would alleviate the financial burden of attending college for Buffalo Public and Charter School graduates for generations to come,” said David Rust, Say Yes Buffalo executive director. “Since the promise of a college scholarship to a unique set of public and private colleges was offered to Buffalo’s students five years ago, we’ve seen double digit percentage increases in the number of students graduating high school, enrolling into college and persisting to complete their postsecondary education. We are overjoyed that Governor Cuomo recognizes the socioeconomic benefits of the program and has committed to further support it.”

“The first Buffalo Billion allowed 43North to be a catalyst for regional economic growth through the support of startups and entrepreneurship,” said Bill Maggio, 43North Board Chair. “Over three years, we’ve awarded \$15 million to nearly 30 startups who have matured their businesses in Buffalo and have become necessary examples of innovation to our community. As a result, they’ve been able to raise

more than \$20 million in additional funding and have reinvested their capital in local service providers. Buffalo Billion 2 is crucial as we continue to draw world-class entrepreneurs here to do business and cultivate an entrepreneurial culture in WNY."

"Governor Cuomo's commitment to Western New York has been instrumental in the rebirth and revitalization of Buffalo – including its growth and development as a visitor destination," said Visit Buffalo Niagara President and CEO Patrick Kaler. "The projects outlined in the next phase of the Buffalo Billion initiative – from investments on our Outer Harbor to the expansion of our Metro Rail, construction of a Grand Island visitor welcome center and creation of a new marketing campaign will help sustain that momentum for years to come."

"The Better Buffalo Fund allows for targeted public investment in neighborhood commercial corridors," said University District Community Development Association Executive Director Roseann Scibilia. "By making this investment, New York State helps turn economically depressed areas into walkable, attractive places where local businesses can thrive. This is an important piece of a community and economic strategy for Buffalo."

"The Buffalo Billions Fund is enabling organizations like the Community Action Organization to create and implement neighborhood-based initiatives to improve residential infrastructure and improve local business districts," said Community Action Organization Executive Director L. Nathan Hare. "Through the CAO's ongoing partnership with our area State legislative leaders like Senator Tim Kennedy and Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples, we are improving the facades and building infrastructures of businesses along N. Fillmore Avenue leading into Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. The CAO has been able to use Buffalo Billions funds, made available through Governor Andrew Cuomo, along with other state initiatives to lower energy costs and provide emergency home repair and home improvement assistance that is stabilizing housing stock and bringing neighborhoods back to life. The leadership of our area state legislators, supporting Governor Cuomo's vision is not only reshaping and revitalizing downtown Buffalo, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Corridor, the Waterfront and the Solar City, it is also enabling us to bring new life into critical residential communities in Buffalo as well."

"The Fruit Belt coalition endorses progress by any means in our great City of Buffalo," said Fruit Belt Coalition President Dr. Benjamin Cashaw. "The Fruit Belt neighborhood is greatly impacted by any economic progress in the medical corridor, and is looking forward to seeing the benefits thereof."

“The Buffalo Billion Part II brings a strong state commitment to improved surface transportation in Western New York,” said Citizens for Regional Transit President Doug Funke. “With focuses on the long-awaited extension of Metro Rail up to Amherst, along with the rehabilitation of the DL&W Terminal, public transportation is poised to benefit greatly from this proposal. Additionally, the commitment of funds to revive East Side commercial corridors will help to create more livable and accessible communities. The Citizens for Regional Transit are happy to support this funding proposal.”

A full copy of Kennedy’s letter to leadership can be found below:

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

The Honorable John Flanagan
Majority Leader of the New York State Senate
New York State Capitol, Room 330
Albany, New York 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker of the New York State
Assembly
Room 932 LOB
Albany, New York 12248

The Honorable Jeffrey Klein
Leader of the Independent Democrat
Conference
Room 913 LOB
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, Majority Leader Flanagan, and Leader Klein:

I write in support of the Buffalo Billion II initiative included in Governor Cuomo's proposed budget, to ask for support across regional and partisan boundaries in the state of New York, and to demand its inclusion in the final budget.

With the Governor's proposed budget calling for a continuation of the Buffalo Billion in the form of \$500 million in new funding, I write to inform you that this funding is critical to Western New York's continued growth and I cannot in good conscience vote for a final budget that does not include it.

As a Senator representing the people of Western New York, I have personally seen the results of decades of neglect by New York State. I have seen businesses leave, populations decline, and neighborhoods decay. In recent years, however, these trends have finally started to reverse. Companies are choosing Buffalo, young adults are able to put roots down in their hometown and raise their families here, and communities that we saw crumble are coming back to life. Much of this renewal can be attributed to vital state programs each of us supported like SUNY 2020, and especially to the Buffalo Billion – a unique investment made to address Western New York's unique problems. This intense level of targeted state funding has resulted not just in new jobs and economic growth, but the end of a cultural malaise that had overtaken Western New York.

While the first Buffalo Billion was targeted to large and transformational economic projects, the new proposal will focus on smaller and targeted funding projects helping to create jobs across the entire region.

The second round of funding will benefit the entire Western New York Region; twenty percent of the proposed funding will go to communities outside of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, including money to the National Comedy Center in Jamestown, and a \$20 million investment that will allow local municipalities to compete for downtown revitalization projects. Niagara Falls would benefit from new tourism facilities and 135 acres of green parkland along the Niagara Gorge, driving more money from visitors to help revitalize its city.

Money will be set aside to turn the old Bethlehem Steel site into an industrial park for new businesses to invest in Lackawanna. The light rail will be extended into Amherst and the DL&W Terminal, connecting residents to the suburbs and to the East Side of Buffalo. A full ten percent of proposed funds would be dedicated to Buffalo's East Side, a high poverty area of the city, moving an advanced manufacturing center into the Northland Corridor, which will house a worker training

center and allow residents to receive the training required to succeed in today's economy. These are not simply job-creating infrastructure projects. Instead, these are projects that build upon Western New York's strengths, while shoring up the systemic weaknesses that have held us back.

These projects represent a portion of the total impact a Buffalo Billion II will have on Western New York. It is clear that the proposed spending is targeted for a maximum economic and employment impact across our entire region, creating more jobs and investment, and continuing the economic recovery of Western New York. Now is not the time to back away from New York's commitment to Western New York, and I will continue to advocate for the funding the region needs and deserves.

For these reasons, I urge you to join us in continuing our state's commitment to the region, and support the inclusion of \$500 million in new Buffalo Billion funding in this year's state budget. I will not support a final budget that does not build upon the momentum and the rebirth the region has experienced. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to working with you to ensure New York's commitment to Western New York is maintained.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy

New York State Senator, 63rd District

Cc: Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Leader Brian Kolb