



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

City must notify residents of homeless shelters in advance: Senator Avella

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Albany, NY — For years, Senator Avella has led the fight in Queens with community groups upset when the city opens a shelter without notification.

But under a proposal advancing in the New York State budget, pushed by **Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens)**, and his colleagues in the Independent Democratic Conference, the City would be required to give elected officials, community groups and residents ample time to provide insight on shelter siting.

“Mayor de Blasio has continuously failed to provide communities in New York City with adequate information on the placement of homeless shelters. Residents need know what is going on in their neighborhoods and have a say in the process when they have concerns. This legislation adds accountability to the process and ensures

that when any shelter is planned the community members are made aware and it is safe for families staying there,” **said Senator Avella.**

Under the IDC proposal advancing in this year’s budget communities would have a greater amount of input on the placement of shelters within their communities than by those announced by the Mayor’s Office. Rather than community notification 30 days prior to the opening of a permanent shelter, the proposal gives communities notice 45 days before the Mayor’s Office of Contract Services hearings. The legislation would also empower local community boards to request public hearings on a shelter. DHS would be required to modify its proposal based on reasonable concerns from such hearings.

For temporary shelters the proposal requires notification one week from the city’s use of the hotel as a shelter and requires DHS perform inspections to ensure sites are safe and free of violations. They must also maintain a publicly available list of these sites. The legislation also requires a quarterly report from DHS on the use and proposed use of these sites to be submitted to local elected officials. Because many times hotels are used for weather related emergencies, the legislation allows for 48 hour post placement notification in the event of an emergency situation.

The IDC is also advocating for the inclusion of the Home Stability Support program in the budget. This comprehensive initiative would provide a statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are facing eviction, are currently homeless or who have lost housing due to domestic violence and/or hazardous conditions.

In January, Senator Avella and the Independent Democratic Conference released an investigative report, *“Horrors in Homeless Housing,”* detailing the conditions inside the hotels and cluster sites used for homeless housing. The city announced a five year phase out of these sites and a proposal to open 90 additional permanent shelters soon after.

The report listed the top ten worst offenders in both categories, with sites that had violations for issues such as rodent and roach infestations, mold, lead paint, unlawful cooking areas and failure to install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.