



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara continues to push legislation to end unfunded state mandates

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 31, 2019

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Senator O'Mara is co-sponsoring Senate legislation that would ban any future state mandates that increase costs on local governments and school districts without providing state funding to pay for delivering the required programs and services.

Albany, N.Y., January 31—State Senator Tom O'Mara today urged Governor Andrew Cuomo and state legislative leaders to get behind legislation to end the practice of unfunded state mandates on local governments and school districts.

O'Mara is co-sponsoring legislation (**S.2017**) in the Senate that would ban any future state mandates that increase costs on local governments and school districts without providing state funding to pay for delivering the required programs and services.

“The state enacted the local property tax cap in 2011 with a promise to localities and school districts to roll back one of the nation’s heaviest burdens of unfunded state mandates. That promise has not been kept and we still have a lot of work to do to lift the existing burden off the backs of local governments and local property taxpayers,” said O'Mara. “But we should also immediately put an end to any future unfunded state mandates. This legislation proposes a commonsense step that says the state will no longer pass the buck to counties, cities, town, villages, or school districts. If the state mandates a program or a service that increases costs, the state should pay for it.”

O'Mara said the legislation keeps attention focused on the need for New York to provide mandate relief to local governments and school districts, which O'Mara said will become particularly acute for many municipalities if a new proposal by the governor to eliminate the Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) program is enacted. AIM is the largest source of state revenue sharing to localities. **It's estimated that the Cuomo cut could result in the elimination of AIM for 1,328 of New York's 1,465 towns and villages, including towns and villages throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions.**

The legislation to end unfunded state mandates would also mark, if enacted, the beginning of a true transformation of the state-local partnership, O'Mara said. The state has taken some important mandate relief actions over the past several years, including long-term pension reform and the takeover of the growth in local Medicaid costs.

But it hasn't been enough, according to O'Mara.

“Some meaningful steps have been taken to rein in the cost of Medicaid, for example,” said O’Mara. “But we can’t keep turning our backs on the fact that more needs to be done. Mandate relief has to remain a state priority. Localities and school districts facing tough fiscal challenges still have their hands tied by too many unfunded state mandates.”

The legislation must be approved by both houses of the Legislature and signed by the governor before becoming law. It is currently in the Senate Local Governments Committee.