



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## King Urban Life Center and Senator Tim Kennedy, Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes Announce Significant State Investment in Comprehensive Historic Restoration Project

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 11, 2020

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BUFFALO, NY – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) and Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes joined Dr. Claity Massey, Executive Director of the King Urban Life Center and leaders from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation today to announce a \$500,000 state grant for the Center’s much-needed \$1.5 million restoration project. King Urban Life Center is housed in the former St. Mary of Sorrows

Church, which is a significant architectural landmark in the City of Buffalo, and has been listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places since 1987. Recent building assessments have identified the need for critical repairs; leaking roofs, a deteriorating foundation, and masonry and carpentry work to the Center's bell tower and steeple are all issues to be addressed. The state grant announced today will help support restoration efforts, allowing the Center to address these structural vulnerabilities, preserving the building's integrity and preventing further deterioration to the historic space.

"The King Urban Life Center has remained a constant fixture in the lives of Buffalo's children and families for decades, fostering a space for learning and building a sense of community," said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. "It is imperative that New York does its part to ensure this historic beacon of hope remains preserved for generations to come, and this state funding will support that mission, stabilizing the Center's long-term accessibility. Above all, this is a win for the surrounding community that relies on the Center's adult and family programming every day."

"This \$500,000 state grant will go a long way in paying for critical renovations to the former St. Mary of Sorrows Church which houses the King Urban Life Center," said **Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes**. "For more than two decades the center has served as an 'Oasis of Hope' serving children and families on Buffalo's East Side. This \$1.5 million restoration project will help ensure the King Urban Life Center will continue to serve our people and our city for years to come."

"Our hearts are filled with gratitude to all who are making it possible to restore this architectural gem so that its beauty may continue to bless the community," said **Dr. Claity Massey, Executive Director of the King Urban Life Center**.

“Ensuring that our children and families have a safe place to gather is vital to community development. Restoration of this historic building is a prime example of how we can all work together to strengthen not only our history but our neighborhoods and our families,” said **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Western District Director Mark Mistretta.**

King Urban Life Center opened its doors at the former St. Mary of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church in 1996. After years of steady decay and destruction, the structure, widely recognized by its 235-foot tall tower, was originally slated for demolition, but was saved by community leaders and neighbors who believed its removal would be a blow to an already neglected neighborhood. Over the years, the Center’s role has evolved; it now serves more than 250 children and families each year and provides educational, social, and cultural programs to underserved populations, including the Parent Child + Program, the S.T.E.A.M. Team Afterschool Program, Say Yes and Primetime Summer Camp Programs, and a partnership with Houghton College Eastside Associate of Arts Program, offering college courses to Buffalo residents.