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NYS Senator Dean Murray Says “The Budget Must Include a Fix to Tier 6”

There is no question that the adoption of Tier 6 in 2012 has had some very negative impacts on not just the public sector workforce, but also to the taxpayers of New York State. Tier 6 has helped contribute to a severe worker shortage which has, in many cases, diminished the services provided to the taxpayers, while at the same time, dramatically increasing the overtime costs that are paid for by the taxpayers. We must address changes to Tier 6 in the budget, to ensure that these problems do not continue to get worse.

There have been some that say we “can’t afford” to fix Tier 6... that the cost to the taxpayers will be too great. I say that we can’t afford to NOT fix Tier 6. The workforce shortages, felt all across the public sector, are resulting in records amounts of overtime at record costs to the taxpayers.

In 2022, the MTA spent \$1.35 Billion in overtime. One year later, in 2023, the MTA spent a record, \$1.42 Billion in overtime. All of this is of course, paid for by the taxpayers.

NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli recently released a report that showed the dramatic drop in the workforce and the dramatic rise in overtime costs since Tier 6 was signed into law in 2012. According to the report, the 3 agencies that faced the biggest workforce shortages and had the highest OT costs were: The Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and the Office of Mental Health. In 2022, these 3 agencies combined to account for 25% of the workforce but also accounted for 66% of the overtime hours and 62% of the overtime costs. The services that these agencies provide are not optional... they are absolutely vital.

As **Wayne Spence, President, NYS Public Employees Federation**, explains, “There are more than 12,000 vacant jobs in New York State -- from nurses and social workers to parole officers and traffic engineers. These are the public workers who deliver the services New Yorkers depend on. Reforming Tier 6 of the State’s pension plan will go a long way toward attracting and retaining the career civil servants who do those jobs. A solid retirement used to be a major incentive to work for New York State, and it can be again if politicians work with labor unions to Fix Tier 6!”

CSEA Long Island Region One President Jarvis Brown said, “We have an obligation to every New Yorker to reform Tier 6. Doing so will encourage workers to continue making New York State the best state in this country, along with attracting the talent we need to keep our state moving forward. Strengthening out state and local government workforce through pension reform is not just a goal; it is a necessity for progress.”

These are the workers that are providing vital services for our children, our families, our seniors, the disabled and New Yorkers who are most in need... all in the name of public service.

These are also the workers that we count on to serve and protect while putting their lives in danger.

“This generation of police officers is being cheated out of a fair retirement, due to pension cuts imposed by Tier 6, virtually forcing them to pay for risking their lives on a daily basis,” said **Lou Civello, President of the Suffolk County Police Benevolent Association**. He added, “The reward for decades of work should be fair pay and a decent retirement, but young police officers are not able to enjoy the same benefits that previous generations received. It’s becoming an impediment to hiring qualified cops, which is now going to impact public safety.

“Tiers 5 and 6 are fundamentally flawed. The disparity and diminishment in pension benefits for Tier 5 and 6 members has long been a concern that is negatively impacting our members and workers across the state,” said **Suffolk County Superior Officers Association President, James Gruenfelder**.

It’s clear that the time is now, to Fix Tier 6. Whether it’s the ever-growing cost of overtime or the vital services that could be lost, we cannot let this continue. These public servants need to know that they are needed and appreciated, and their services are valued. It’s simple... if they don’t, they leave... If they leave... we ALL lose!

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