



# LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS

June 2009

## **Update: What's New with Timothy's Law?**

Timothy's Law, legislation to provide insurance parity for treatment of mental illness on par with that available for other physical illnesses, has held a prominent place on NYS PTA's advocacy agenda. At the 2004 Legislation Education Conference, Tom O' Clair shared his family's agonizing journey through the social service and health insurance systems for treatment and support of son Timothy's emotional disorders. The journey ended with the O' Clair's losing 13-year old Timothy to suicide. For conference attendees, Mr. O' Clair brought into sharp focus the barriers to access and financial support for those suffering from mental health and chemical addition illnesses. In response, grassroots PTA advocates rolled up their sleeves, dove into the research, wrote a resolution on Mental Health Insurance Parity and submitted it to NYS PTA for consideration at the 2005 convention. This resolution established a PTA position to support legislation for parity insurance to assist children and youth in need of mental health services and to educate parents and the school community about parity issues – it was unanimously adopted by the 2005 convention delegates. In December 2006, Timothy's Law was signed by then-governor George E. Pataki and went into effect in January, 2007.

So, what's new? Set to expire in December 2009 and in celebration of Timothy O' Clair's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, on May 5<sup>th</sup> Governor David A. Paterson announced legislation to make permanent Chapter 748 of the Laws of 2006, "Timothy's Law." Stating that this law has had an enormous impact on countless New Yorkers, Governor Paterson added that 'The impact of Timothy's Law has been far reaching, going beyond the requirement that health insurance cover treatment for mental health conditions, to help eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness and those with mental health conditions that too often cause people to go without the care and treatment we know is effective. Read about the powerful impact of this law as determined by the Commissioner of Insurance in consultation with the Office of Mental Health...

[http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press\\_0505092.html](http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press_0505092.html)

[http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/WHERE\\_WE\\_STAND\\_2009\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/WHERE_WE_STAND_2009_2_.pdf)

*~ We celebrate the life of Timothy O'Clair with thanks to our PTA advocates ~*

## **Around the State:**

### **Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) Tax Passes Legislature**

A late-night vote to adopt Governor Paterson's plan to infuse the Metropolitan Transit Authority with about \$2.3 billion annually, reducing the proposed transit fee hike from 20% to 10%, passed the state legislature at the end of April. New taxes and fees to raise the revenue will impose a 34 cent per dollar tax on payroll for all employers, including small businesses, schools and other non-profits in the 12-county MTA region only. An adjustment to the original proposal provides for school districts in New York City and its suburbs to be reimbursed by an "appropriated" amount by the state, the timing of which negates the purpose of the tax.

Despite the promise of reimbursement to schools and the valid argument that the tax is targeted to the downstate region [http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on\\_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20%20May%2011%202009&refno=847](http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20%20May%2011%202009&refno=847) that benefit from MTA services, this legislation heralds a statewide warning. For the first time in state history, schools are being held responsible to offset a financial shortfall for an agency, placing all school districts on the precipice for future raids to fund troubled quasi-governmental agencies. And, the promise of reimbursement to schools will be just as dependent on state revenue as has been the promise of the foundation aid formula, already far behind the intended funding. For information...

<http://www.nysenate.gov/press-release/senate-passes-mta-bailout-and-reform-package>

[http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on\\_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20%20May%2011%202009&refno=847](http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20%20May%2011%202009&refno=847)

## **Governor Continues Crusade for Property Tax Cap**

In order to provide tax relief, Governor Paterson claims the state needs to cap spending, decrease unfunded mandates placed on local governments, reform the public employee pension system and the public employee health benefits, a 4 percent per year tax cap on schools should be passed, state agencies should be consolidated and local governments should be encouraged to share services. Read about NYS PTA's position on property tax caps and mandates. For more information...

[http://www.legislativegazette.com/read\\_more.php?story=3815&searchstr=mta](http://www.legislativegazette.com/read_more.php?story=3815&searchstr=mta)

<http://www.nyspta.org/advocacy/lobbyday.cfm>

<http://www.nyspta.org/advocacy/briefs.cfm>

## **Calorie Posting Legislation Introduced as Part of the State's Fight Against Obesity**

On May 18th Governor Paterson announced his proposal for legislation to help fight obesity by requiring calorie posting in restaurants, supermarkets and convenience stores that belong to large chains. This initiative, which the Governor discussed in his State of the State address, is part of the State's War on Obesity and his five-point plan. He feels this will help consumers make informed choices when purchasing food prepared away from home. This requirement is already in place in New York City. NYS PTA has not taken a position on this. Learn more...

[http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press\\_0518091.html](http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press_0518091.html)

## **Cultural Education (CE) Funding Depleted**

As a direct result of the severe decline in State revenue and the annual and special transfers of funds to support other State purposes through the State budget process, funding for cultural education is severely depleted. The current revenue level of the CE Account will barely cover personal services and related costs alone; coupled with critically essential non-personal service spending, the account will likely have a negative cash balance of more than \$20 Million by the end of the next fiscal year. Bills **A6783 / S3640** have been introduced to provide funding through increased county fees on specific filings to ensure every student has access to Arts resources in NYS. For information...

[http://www.nysaae.org/Cultural\\_Ed\\_Fund.htm](http://www.nysaae.org/Cultural_Ed_Fund.htm)

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A0678>

## ***Around the Capitol:***

### **Congress Needs to Boost Funding for Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC)**

Spring time is when Congress decides how it will spend your taxpayer dollar; National PTA asks that you take the time to tell them why PIRCS are important. PIRCS provide parents, organizations, schools, school districts, and state educational agencies with comprehensive training, information and support for parent involvement from early childhood through adolescence. For more information and to *Take Action*...

<http://www.pta.org/2994.htm>

## **National School Boards Association Adopts Position on National Standards**

The Delegate Assembly of the National School Boards Association voted last month to adopt a position on national standards, while still maintaining local control of school districts. While NSBA opposes the federal government developing standards, it does believe that a common set of standards, not mandated by the federal government but supported by it, can lead to raising student achievement.

<http://onlinepressroom.net/nsba/news>