News from Senator
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TAP Funding Increases for First Time in 14 Years
State Legislators, NYPIRG Call for Funding to Meet Needs of Rising College Costs

Flushing, NY—Senator Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Flushing), Assemblywoman Nily Rozic (D, WF-Fresh Meadows and Chair of the NYPIRG Board of Directors Aileen Sheil joined the Queens College chapter of NYPIRG to praise the slight increase in Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) funding while calling for more tuition relief assistance for New York students.

The boost in maximum grant level from $5,000 to $5,165 in this year’s budget was the first increase in Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) funding in 14 years.

“TAP was created as a fund for investment in the future of our state,” said Senator Stavisky. “To reaffirm that purpose, it must be updated to meet the needs of a 21st century student. That includes changes so that it can serve the needs of homeless students, the needs of students with dependent children and the needs of graduate students.”

This long overdue increase of 3% is dwarfed by the rocketing cost of college, which has risen nearly 40% for undergraduate tuition, room and board at public institutions and 28% at private institutions between 2000-02 and 2011-12, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

“There is an urgent need to address the massive debt that’s already crushing our young people. Tying students to a lifetime of financial servitude as a condition of getting an education does not reflect our values,” said Assemblywoman Rozic. “In order to secure our economic future, we need to make quality education more affordable for all.”

TAP is also plagued by various outdated rules and regulations that make receiving the maximum grant difficult for many students. For example, orphans and foster children, who are categorized
as independent single students without children, are ineligible for the award if they earn more than $10,000 in net taxable income a year.

"It is vital that the maximum TAP award be increased to $6,500 and that it is accessible to all students, regardless of documentation. New York State's Tuition Assistance Program should not be another block in the road preventing students from receiving an affordable higher education," said Aileen Sheil, chair of NYPIRG's Board of Directors.

“The Tuition Assistance Program is a vital resource for many New Yorkers attending college. Increasing the maximum award to $6,500 for all students will provide much-needed financial aid for increasingly expensive tuition. Additionally, the current award schedules for TAP are obsolete and exclude many individuals who need this assistance, which prevents access to quality education. These reforms would ensure that TAP meets the needs of New York’s students and families,” said Assemblyman Braunstein.

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