



TOM CILMI
Suffolk County Legislator
10th District

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Legislators and Police Commissioner hold “Social Host” Roundtable
Cilmi Announces proposed changes

Suffolk Legislators Tom Cilmi and Monica R. Martinez announced that they are filing an amendment to the County’s Social Host Law to further strengthen a law that’s been on the books since 2007 and that Cilmi has amended once before.

The announcement was made at a meeting on May 2, 2016 organized by Cilmi in cooperation with Suffolk Police Commissioner Tim Sini and Legislators Monica R. Martinez, Tom Barraga and William J. Lindsay III. Attendees included superintendents and representatives from eight area school districts as well as leaders from community coalitions, neighborhood watch groups, chambers of commerce and other community leaders. Schools represented included Islip, East Islip, Connetquot, Bay Shore, West Islip, Brentwood, Hauppauge and Sachem.

The law as currently written calls for a “violation” to be issued the first time an adult age eighteen or older is found to have knowingly permitted alcohol to be served to minors other than his or her children on a premises controlled by that adult. That violation comes with a \$500 fine. A second offense would be classified as a misdemeanor punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine, a year in jail or both.

One of the impediments to charging a “violation,” according to Police Commissioner Tim Sini, is that a police officer must personally witness the act. The proposed amendment, which will be officially filed at the Legislature’s next General Meeting, would change the first offense to a misdemeanor and therefore allow the Police Department to rely on witness testimony to make a charge. Officers would naturally maintain reasonable discretion and violators would all have their day in court.

Cilmi said, "We must use every tool in our arsenal to fight underage drinking. Our schools, our communities have been crying out for better enforcement and we believe that, where it can be proven that an adult knowingly allowed alcohol to be served at a party at their home to underage children, there should be consequences. Far too often we hear about parties, often times around graduation season, where dozens of kids show up to drink, then spill out into the neighborhood. We are sending the wrong message to our kids that it's OK for minors to drink, and unfortunately, that message has found its way to our middle school children who are drinking and even smoking at earlier ages. It's got to stop. It's a new day in Suffolk County. My advice to anyone planning one of these parties is to strongly reconsider."

Cilmi credited Commissioner Tim Sini for making the suggestion and for his partnership in this fight.

Commissioner Sini said, "Underage drinking is illegal and dangerous," said Suffolk Police Commissioner Tim Sini." Parents should be on notice that the Suffolk County Police Department will be aggressively enforcing the County's Social Host law, which makes it a crime to permit underage drinking in your home."

Legislator Monica R. Martinez said, "As a former administrator and educator of the Brentwood School District, I have witnessed first-hand the peer pressure that many of our students are faced with on daily basis, including the act of social drinking. Putting forth this amendment to the existing legislation sends a clear message to any parent or individual over the age of 18, who witnesses underage drinking, that they will be held accountable. This proposed legislation further enhances the African proverb that it truly does takes a village to raise a child."

At the meeting, school officials were given special Police Department phone numbers to call in the event they hear of a party in advance. Police will then make a proactive visit to the residence in advance to warn homeowners.

Cilmi said, "We are pulling out all the stops. Too many parents shrug off underage drinking as being a 'safer' alternative to other drugs. Meanwhile, our drinkers are eventually turning to pot and our smokers are turning to prescription drugs and heroin in alarming numbers. Overdose victims invariably started down a path of addictive behavior with alcohol and I've spoken to far too many grieving parents to ever give up this fight."

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