

Press Release

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 15, 2015

Contact: BRIAN SAPP

Office: 631-854-9693

Cell: 631-987-3510

LINDSAY III AND COLLEAGUES SIGN PETITION TO KEEP PELL GRANT FUNDING INTACT



(Lindsay III speaking at the May 8th Pell Grant Forum held at SUNY Farmingdale)

(HOLBROOK-NY)- Suffolk County Legislator Bill Lindsay III recently joined his colleagues, in a bipartisan effort, to sign a petition that calls on our Long Island Federal Delegation to keep Pell Grant funding fully intact. Congress recently voted—the first step in an on-going budget process—to cut \$303 million in Pell Grant funding by freezing the per year student maximum of \$5,775 for 10 years. In the 2013-2014 school year, Pell Grants provided funding to nine million low to modest income students so that they could afford the opportunity to attend college.

“I’m proud to join our local students and my colleagues on the Legislature in the fight to keep education affordable for all Long Island students,” said Economic Development Chairman Lindsay III “Education is the great equalizer. It opens up so many doors for low-middle class students to go to college, earn a degree, and to get a job upon graduation.”

Though much of the Pell Grant debate will take place on the federal level, many Long Island college students have partnered with the Suffolk County Legislature to raise awareness to this critical issue. Dowling College student, Ross Slotnick, has led the charge by gathering signatures on college campuses throughout Long Island. In just under one week he and a small group of friends have collected over 200 signatures. They will be continuing their fight through the end of June, when they will submit the signatures to the Long Island Federal Delegation.

Suffolk County Legislature, Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Economic Development Chairman, Bill Lindsay III, and Education and Information Technology Chairwoman, Sarah Anker, joined educators including Dr. W. Hubert Keen, president of Farmingdale State College and chairman of LIRACHE, economists, and local college students who all offered a grim picture of the impact a freeze in Pell Grant funding and other federal college aid cuts in the budget being considered by Congress. The testimony came at a public hearing series held on Wednesday, April 29 at Suffolk County Community College’s Grant campus in Brentwood and Friday, May 8 at SUNY Farmingdale.

The speakers at the hearing all said that the proposed Pell Grant freeze would put college out of reach for thousands of students on Long Island. It would create a huge increase in a student’s debt burden by forcing them to turn to higher-cost private educational loans, and taking students longer to graduate college by forcing them to work part and full-time jobs while attending school to pay for college.

“I probably wouldn’t have been able to attend college if I hadn’t received a Pell Grant and other financial aid, so this issue hits close to home,” said Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory. “Many parents stay up at night worrying about how

they're going to pay for college for their children and these cuts would only make it harder for them to do so."

According to LIRACHE, at the start of the Pell Grant program, Pell Grants covered nearly 72 percent of the cost of attending a 4-year institution. In the most recent school year (2013-2014), the maximum grant covered only 36 percent.

"The Pell Grant Program is the fundamental building block for need-based financial aid," said LIRACHE Vice-Chair Dr. Robert A. Scott, president of Adelphi University in a statement read by Dr. Keen. "At Adelphi University, where 10% of undergraduate students come from families earning \$12,000 per year or less and 25% come from families earning \$30,000 or less, Pell Grants make enrollment possible. Each year, close to 31% of undergraduates are supported by Pell Grants, equaling about \$6.5 million in assistance."

A panel of financial aid directors from local colleges said the Pell Grant freeze would have a disastrous impact. The panel included: Diane Kazanecki Kempter, Director of Financial Aid, Farmingdale State College; Sheryl Mihopulos, Assistant Vice President, Student Financial Services & Financial Aid Compliance, Adelphi University; Jacqueline Pascariello, Director, Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship Services, Stony Brook University; and Amy Thompson, Director of Financial Aid, St. Joseph's College.

"This money is essential to the success of our future generations," said Lindsay III. "A freeze in Pell Grants accompanied by the rising cost of college tuition means that students will be forced to take out more student loans or to not attend college at all. This is just unacceptable."

Petition Link: <https://www.change.org/p/long-island-federal-delegation-keep-college-affordable-by-not-freezing-pell-grant-funding-for-10-years>

*Suffolk County Legislator Bill Lindsay III is the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee and Vice Chairman of the Government Operations, Personnel, Housing, and Consumer Protection Committee. Bill represents the 8th legislative district which consists of Bayport, Blue Point, Bohemia, Holbrook, Holtsville, Oakdale, Sayville, West Sayville and parts of North Patchogue.