

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
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Kingston, NY – Ulster County legislator Robert Parete (D-Stone Ridge) has proposed legislation authorizing the distribution of County Sales Tax receipts to school districts to help fund school-based mental health services and school resource officers.

Legislator Robert Parete calls for an annual allocation of 2.75 percent of Ulster County's sales tax receipts to fund a county-wide program in every school district for crucial mental health services and school resource officers. Schools may use this funding for a variety of services that may include counseling, conflict mediation, school dropout, suicide prevention, crisis intervention, child and family advocacy, peer mediation and intervention programs, anti-bullying, and eating disorders awareness and prevention programs.

Legislator Robert Parete states, "Recent cuts in funding for mental health services have come at a time when demand for these services is at an all time high. As a new father, I feel it's absolutely vital to provide for a safe and productive learning environment, as well as to help alleviate some of the burdens on families who might be struggling with a child's mental health needs, which can be compounded by a lack of access to adequate mental health resources. The stigmatization of people dealing with mental health issues combined with the economic pressures on schools has reduced access to mental health services in Ulster County". Added Legislator Robert Parete.

In the wake of the recent events in Newtown, Connecticut, the best thing that we can be doing with our tax dollars is protecting our children. This legislation is in accordance to the duties and parameters of a county legislator, and may be one of the most significant actions ever taken by the Ulster County Government.

School-Based Mental Health Clinic (SBMH) is a mental health clinic inside a school that offers an assortment of programs and services targeting those students who have emotional and behavioral difficulties in education settings.

School Resource Officer (S.R.O.) Program is an educator, law enforcer and counselor who visits classrooms and teaches students concepts of safety, general law, and crime prevention techniques. The S.R.O. will work closely with individual teachers to create special programs tailored to specific units of study to help increase student awareness and understanding of laws and personal safety. The S.R.O. provides a positive image of law enforcement in an effort to help young people make

constructive choices in their lives. The S.R.O.s primary duty is to protect the school's occupants in a safe environment and to maintain an atmosphere where students, teachers and staff feel safe enough to learn.

This proposal is both reasonable and appropriate particularly with recent savings.

1. As stated in the Golden Hill Fact Sheet, dated October 5, 2011, "The county tax levy for the Golden Hill Health Care Center is projected to increase by \$14 million to \$38 million over the next five years".
<http://www.ulstercountyny.gov/downloads/Golden%20Hill%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>
2. As stated in the Mental Health Fact Sheet of the Executive's 2013 Proposed Budget, "Ulster County will close its Children and Families Services Unit effective December 28, 2012. "These actions will save approximately \$1.5 million
<http://www.ulstercountyny.gov/downloads/2013%20Budget%20Fact%20Sheet%20Mental%20Health.pdf>
3. The 2013 Executive Budget Presentation includes Ulster County's new Flow Control Law that "eliminates the Net Service Fee" which is \$2.5 million in 2013.
<http://www.ulstercountyny.gov/downloads/2013%20Executive%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf> ,
4. Resolution No. 277 of November 13, 2012, authorizes the imposition of a new motor vehicle fee adding an estimated \$915,000.00 in revenue to the County General Fund, equating to approximately \$10,000,000 over the next decade. <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/resolution-archives/2012/277-12>
5. Ulster County refinanced the County's general obligation bonds from the construction of the Ulster County Jail. This refinancing will save the Ulster County taxpayers \$3,000,000. Ulster County has also met the obligation of another bond related to the Jail project, saving millions of additional dollars.
<http://co.ulster.ny.us/execwp/2012/county-executive-mike-hein-announces-resolution-to-refinance-the-ulster-county-jail/>

Legislator Robert Parete is hopeful that the law will have broad support, as every aspect of his proposal has received wide, bi-partisan support in the past when the issues have come up individually. "The Legislature can't afford not to act on this matter. There is too much at stake to sit by and do nothing".

For more information about this proposal, please contact the Ulster County Legislature at 340-3900. A copy of the draft Local Law is attached.