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From

**Legislator Tom Cilmi**

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## **SUFFOLK LEGISLATOR HOPING FOR TUITION RELIEF**



Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore) is urging members of the New York State Senate and Assembly to support bills which would relieve Suffolk (and Nassau) Counties of an unfair financial burden which is costing Suffolk County \$6 million annually.

Cilmi wrote a letter to Governor Cuomo in February asking him to rescind a little-known requirement that forces Suffolk County to reimburse the Fashion Institute of Technology (F.I.T.) for student tuition for Suffolk residents. New York State law requires counties to reimburse neighboring counties for the difference between resident and non-resident tuition for students attending community colleges outside their home county. "This has been going on for years," said Cilmi, "and for years we've been trying to relieve Suffolk of this unfair burden. Now we finally have a chance."

The lawmaker says that he understands the benefit of counties reciprocating with two-year community colleges. But, he says, F.I.T. is a "four year school with a very specialized course offering which offers Baccalaureate and Masters degrees and Suffolk's taxpayers are paying nearly \$9,000 annually for each student

to attend.” In contrast, Suffolk pays Nassau Community College just about \$2,000 per student for Suffolk students. As a result, about 50% of Suffolk’s \$12 million out-of-county tuition cost goes to F.I.T.

Cilmi said, “In these challenging fiscal times we have to look under every rock and stone for savings and this is one egregious example which should have been addressed years ago.”

New York State Senator Owen Johnson (R-Babylon) and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (D-North Hempstead) have introduced bills in their respective houses to limit county’s out-of-county tuition liability to Associates degrees which typically take two years. Cilmi believes this is a fair compromise and is urging the Senate and Assembly to pass the bills (A 08262 and S 4741-A) this session.

Cilmi said, “This will give Suffolk and Nassau taxpayers some needed relief while retaining the general spirit of the law. It will likewise help other downstate counties whose residents may attend F.I.T. It’s just common sense.”