



ASSEMBLYMAN

Michael Cusick

Update from Albany



May 2014

Dear Friend:

I am writing to keep you updated on issues we have been discussing and implementing in Albany during the current legislative session as well as important information about programs and services at home. Included in this update is a tally of the responses to our survey in the last newsletter you received from me. I want to thank all of you who took the time to respond. Your input is valuable to me and helps me to understand specific areas that need improvement or intervention.

As your representative, I continue to work hard to solve the many problems facing our community. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my district office at 718-370-1384 or by email at [cusickm@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:cusickm@assembly.state.ny.us). We are always available to help and glad to assist you.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Cusick  
Member of Assembly  
District 63

## Toll Relief



### Verrazano-Narrows Bridge

Earlier in the year we were able to achieve long-awaited toll relief on the Verrazano bridge for Staten Island residents and commercial drivers with New York state E-ZPass tags. Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Cusick negotiated the deal with the Governor's office and respective leaders in each house to make this discount happen. Staten Island E-ZPass drivers now pay \$5.50 per trip over the Verrazano. The toll break for drivers of commercial vehicles permit all commercial New York state E-ZPass holders to be eligible for a 20 percent discount once they make more than 10 trips over the bridge per month. The bi-partisan effort was a result of hard work by the Senator and Assemblyman Cusick and their tireless hard work paid off.

For more information: (SIR) EZ-Pass/MTA Discount: Call 800-333-8655 or visit <https://www.e-zpassny.com/en/about/plans.shtml>.

## Reminder To Sign Up For These Discounts

### Goethals, Bayonne and Outerbridge crossings

A toll relief plan negotiated last year by Assemblyman Cusick and Senator Lanza gives E-ZPass holders a reduced toll on their third trip over New Jersey spans in a 30-day period. Once the third trip is taken, the first two trips paid at a peak rate of \$10.25 are rolled back to \$5.25. To sign up for the three-trip plan call the Port Authority at 1-800-333-8655 or visit [www.panynj.gov](http://www.panynj.gov). You can also go to the New York E-ZPass Customer Service Center at 1150 South Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10314. Those enrolled in the 10-trip plan will be automatically absorbed into the three-trip plan.

### MTA Metro Card discount

Customers who are 65 years of age or older or have a qualifying disability are eligible for this discount. The base subway or local bus fare is \$2.50.

With a Reduced-Fare MetroCard discount, customers will pay half the base fare, \$1.25 or less. For more information, call 311 or go to <http://web.mta.info/nyct/fare/rfapply.htm>. You can also visit any MetroCard Customer Service Center.

Applications for the Staten Island Resident discount sticker can be accessed at [web.mta.info/nyct/fare/rfindex.htm](http://web.mta.info/nyct/fare/rfindex.htm).

# What we enacted in the FY 201



## State budget increases funding for NYC schools by \$435 million

The FY 2014-2015 state budget allocates more than \$8.6 billion to New York City schools, an increase of over \$435 million more than last year. The budget also dedicates \$300 million per year for two years for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in New York City.

## Reforming Common Core

The FY 2014-2015 state budget also helps fix the flawed implementation of Common Core, protects students from unfair consequences based on test results and ensures the security of sensitive student data. Some of the Common Core reforms enacted in the state budget include banning standardized tests for students in grades K-2, prohibiting Common Core test scores from solely or primarily determining grade promotion and delaying the use of test results from becoming part of the permanent record for students in grades 3-8.

## Making college education more affordable

The FY 2014-2015 state budget helps grow our higher education system by providing \$10.4 billion for SUNY and \$4.3 billion for CUNY. This year's budget also helps students and parents by increasing funding for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for the first time in 14 years and restores funding for other college opportunity programs.

## Boosting TAP and other college opportunity programs

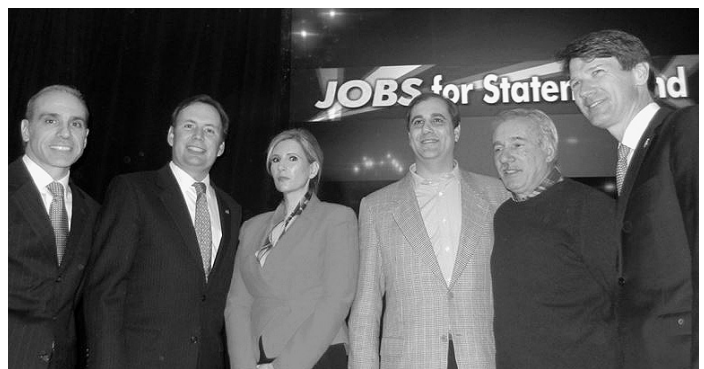
The maximum TAP award will be increased by \$165 for an award of \$5,165 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. The budget also provides \$102 million in funding for college opportunity programs. The funding restores cuts and provides a 3 percent increase for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) program and the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP).

## STEM scholarship program

The FY 2014-2015 state budget allocated \$8 million for the STEM scholarship program which is a brand new program for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Full tuition scholarships to any SUNY or CUNY institutions will be offered to the top 10 percent of high school graduates if they pursue a STEM career and work in New York State for five years.

## College of Staten Island high-performance computer center

The FY 2014-2015 state budget included \$10 million for a major computer center at CSI. The Interdisciplinary High Performance Computer Center, which is a state-of-the-art research and learning facility will be built on the Willowbrook campus, which is already home to the college's super



*Borough President James Oddo, Assemblyman Mike Cusick, Gina Argento, CEO of Broadway Stages, Senator Andrew Lanza, Anthony Arento, CEO of Broadway Stages, and Ken Adams, President of the Empire State Development Corp. attend the announcement of the future film studio - Broadway Stages in Staten Island.*

computer. Assemblyman Cusick and Assemblyman Titone along with Senator Lanza secured the funding which will bring the new facility into the design phase to begin the bidding process. The center will also include research space for faculty, lecture halls and classrooms.

## Creating jobs and cutting taxes for businesses

The FY 2014-2015 state budget focuses on creating jobs and promoting a more business-friendly climate in New York State.

### Helping manufacturers

In an effort to attract more businesses to the state and create more local jobs, the budget provides tax incentives to manufacturing businesses looking to set up shop in New York. One such incentive eliminates the income tax on manufacturers, saving businesses \$193 million dollars starting in 2014-15, creating jobs and revitalizing the economy.

### Reducing utility costs

New York companies pay some of the highest energy costs in the nation. The budget's elimination of the 18-a temporary utility surcharge will lower their cost of doing business, making it possible for businesses to hire more employees.

### Keeping NY jobs here

The budget also includes a corporate tax cut that will amount to approximately \$500 million when fully phased in. This initiative merges New York's bank tax and corporate tax and lowers the corporate tax rate from 7.1 percent to 6.5 percent. The budget also phases out the practice of calculating the corporate tax based on assets rather than income.

Additionally, the budget provides \$70 million in Excelsior Tax Credits for a fourth round of Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) and \$150 million in flexible, new economic development capital funding.

## Film Studio buys former Arthur Kill Correctional Facility

In February, the former Arthur Kill Correctional Facility was purchased from the State by a Brooklyn-based Film studio, Broadway Stages, for \$7 million. Empire State Development had been reviewing proposals since the former prison closed in 2011. Broadway Stages was selected because they intend to provide an additional \$20 million in private investments and generate 1,500 jobs, many of which are expected to be union positions. The company has named the new facility Broadway Stages on Staten Island. The company provides services to Warner Bros. and Universal Studios, CBS and HBO. Some of the jobs that will be generated by the new facility will be for carpenters, electrical workers, grips, special effects, sound and video technicians and food service workers.

# 4-2015 New York State Budget

## State budget saves research jobs at Institute for Basic Research



The FY 2014-2015 state budget included \$750,000 in funding to maintain 24 employees at the Institute for Basic Research (IBR). The employees are paid by grants provided from the Research Foundation of Mental Hygiene (RFMH), and were slated to be cut. “In February I made it clear to the leadership in our house that it was imperative that we save the IBR jobs. IBR is a one of a kind research institute specifically designed to study and evaluate the cause of developmental disabilities including autism and down syndrome. Early diagnosis along with prevention and treatment methods are critical to saving lives and improving the quality of life of our children and adults living with developmental disabilities,” said Assemblyman Cusick.

## Coverage for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Services

Assemblyman Cusick has introduced legislation (A.7003-A/S.4623-A), which would ensure that patients suffering from drug and alcohol dependency receive appropriate care. The bill directs insurers to provide authorization and payment to appropriately licensed healthcare providers for detoxification, rehabilitation and intensive residential rehabilitation based on the examining physician’s recom-

mendation. Following the enactment of a law Assemblyman Cusick authored in 2012 known as I-STOP (Chapter 447 of the laws of 2012) to curb the abuse of prescription controlled substances, Cusick introduced the new legislation so that individuals with drug or alcohol addiction are able to access appropriate services from their insurer.



*Assemblyman Cusick speaks at a press conference on his legislation (A.7003-A), which would ensure that those suffering from drug or alcohol addiction have access to treatment that is covered by their insurer.*



*Assemblyman Cusick sits on the panel of the New York State Assembly roundtable discussions to address the sharp increase in illicit opiate and heroin use.*

## DISCOUNT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS



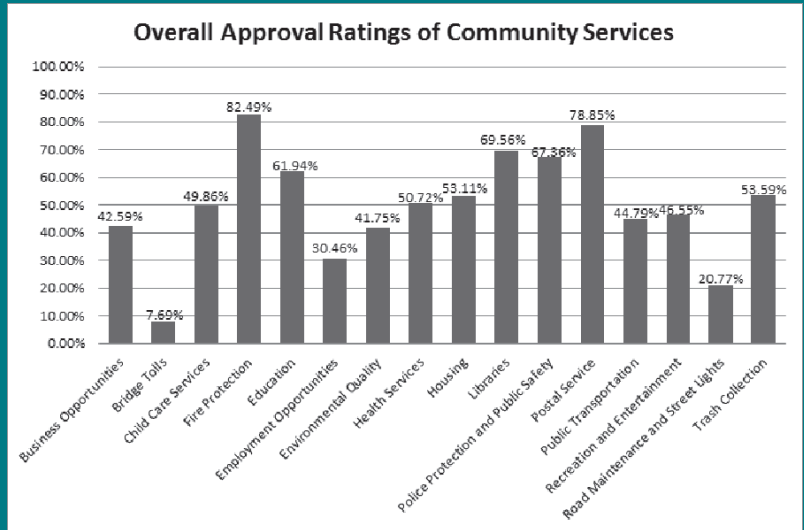
Assemblyman Cusick partnered with the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce to initiate a discount program for veterans of the United States military who live in Staten Island. To join this program and receive reductions on goods and services at participating businesses sign up at Assemblyman Cusick’s office (1911 Richmond Ave., 718-370-1384). Bring your discharge papers (DD-214) to receive the Staten Island VETS card. You will be given a listing of participating businesses that offer discounts at their establishments.



# UNCLAIMED MONEY

The New York State Office of the Comptroller may have money that belongs to you! There is over \$12 billion dollars of unclaimed money from bank accounts, stocks and bonds, utility deposits, income tax refunds, and inheritances to name a few. To see if New York State has money that belongs to you go to the Comptroller's website and click on Unclaimed Funds. All you have to do is enter your name and your city. [www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us).

## Results from the Community Survey sent out to you in February 2014



As we continue in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Assemblyman Cusick and his staff are available to help you.

If you are still dealing with any storm-related issue, please contact our office at 718-370-1384 or email [cusickm@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:cusickm@assembly.state.ny.us).



Assemblyman  
**Michael Cusick**  
**UPDATE FROM ALBANY**

MAY 2014

## Total Fitness Challenge 2014

To encourage children to exercise both their mind and body during the summer months, I established the Total Fitness Challenge in 2007. We are kicking off the 2014 Total Fitness Challenge which is open to all students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Each child must read at least 30 minutes every day and perform as many physical activities as they want. The different physical activities are assigned varying point values which count toward each student's total score. A Total Fitness medal will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place top scorers from each grade among the island-wide entries. A trophy will be given to the school having the most points and participants in the challenge.

For more information visit: [www.totalfitnesschallenge.org](http://www.totalfitnesschallenge.org) or call my District Office at 718-370-1384.

