



Staten Island Advance

Council allots 50Gs to help Island juvenile diabetes patients

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Staten Island Advance

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- The City Council approved yesterday a \$50,000 expenditure to aid juvenile diabetes patients on Staten Island and a package of bills to create a bedbug advisory board, curb predatory debt collectors and empower a commission to find ways to attract more residents to city beaches.

Councilmen James Oddo (R-Mid-Island/Brooklyn) and Vincent Ignizio (R-South Shore) drew the money from their pool of Council discretionary funds for Staten Island University Hospital Children's Diabetes Services. The money will be used for education about and treatment of a disease that is more prevalent on the Island than any other borough.

During yesterday's Stated Meeting, Ignizio noted the contribution was personal as well as good health policy: His wife, Letizia, has dealt with juvenile diabetes from the age of 5.

In other legislation, the Council created a bedbug advisory board charged with creating a comprehensive prevention and treatment plan for what has become a growing citywide epidemic. According to city statistics, complaints about bedbugs rose more than 62 percent between 2007 and 2008 on Staten Island, while violations doubled during that time -- both the highest figures of any borough.

The advisory committee also will be responsible for educating the public and coordinating the efforts of health and housing professionals. It will comprise representatives of the departments of Consumer Affairs, Health and Mental Hygiene, Sanitation, Information Technology and Communications, and Housing Preservation, as well as a pest management professional, an entomologist, and a community health professional.

A new law will require so-called "debt buyers" to be licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). Debt buyers are companies that purchase delinquent or charged-off debts from a creditor for a fraction of the face value, then either collect their own or hire another agency to do it for them. Complaints about these companies topped the DCA's list last year, and have more than doubled in a four-year span, according to Council statistics.

A 2007 report by the Urban Justice Center found that debt collectors bring approximately 320,000 cases against New Yorkers every year, and obtain approximately \$800 million in judgments.

Council members hope another bill will strengthen the underutilized Waterfront Management Advisory Board, which was originally created to find ways to expand recreation along the city's 578 miles of waterfront. The board has not convened in 16 years, since David Dinkins' mayoralty. Under the new legislation, the mayor will appoint 12 members from various industries, environmental advocates and community advocates, provided that at least one is from each borough. The board will issue a biennial report on the development of the waterfront, with the first due March 1, 2010.