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***For immediate release***

***Science Lab Initiative Announced for the 103rd NYS Assembly District***

NEW PALTZ – The Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz and New York State Assemblymember Kevin Cahill (Ulster, Dutchess),  announce the Science Lab Initiative (SLI), a collaborative undertaking funded by a $500,000 capital grant to support the creation of science and technology labs in school districts in the 103rd NYS Assembly District.

The goal of SLI is to encourage scientific curiosity and creativity, build student interest in science and promote science education in middle and high schools through the creation of state-of-the-art science labs and accompanying programming. The schools included in this initiative are Kingston City School District, New Paltz Central School District, Onteora Central School District, Red Hook Central School District, Rhinebeck Central School District, Rondout Valley Central School District, Wallkill Central School District, Ulster BOCES and Woodstock Day School.

Participants have the opportunity to receive $50,000 in capital support for the creation of a science and technology lab at the middle or high school level. Funding for this endeavor comes from the New York State Capital Assistance Program through the New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York.  The Benjamin Center at the State University of New York at New Paltz will administer this grant and provide support to each school district in the development and implementation phase.

School district officials met on Oct.17 to learn more about the grant program and heard from Superintendent Joe Phelan of Rhinebeck Central Schools, whose district received funding for a science and technology lab previously through a collaborative effort with Assemblymember Cahill’s Office and the Rhinebeck Science Foundation.

“The Science Lab Initiative of the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, with funding provided through a capital grant by the New York State Assembly, is an opportunity for the nine schools located in my Assembly District to significantly enhance the experience

of middle and high school students in the areas of science and technology,” Assemblymember Cahill said.  “For some, it will be the beginning of a lifelong relationship with those fields.”

"The Benjamin Center is excited about leading this collaborative regional initiative between our public university and the school districts in the 103rd Assembly District to enhance STEM education in our region," the Center Director Gerald Benjamin said. "We will call upon expertise not only from our Center but also from the schools of Education, Science and Engineering and the statewide Master Teacher Program. This is an extraordinary example of the synergies that may be achieved by creatively engaging the resources of our university in service to the region."

“We are deeply appreciative of this new funding, which will enable us to purchase the equipment necessary to provide our students with dynamic learning experiences,” commented Dr. Paul Padalino, Superintendent of the Kingston City School District. “Rapid advances in scientific technology are the earmark of our digital age, and while we can modify our curriculum, it is financially difficult for KCSD to keep pace with providing the hands-on tools students need. This funding will help us to do just that.”

Superintendent Kevin Castle of the Wallkill Central School District stated, “We are grateful that Assemblymember Kevin Cahill is providing school districts that he represents an opportunity to receive grant monies to enhance our technology and science labs. Wallkill Central School District currently provides students with many STEM opportunities and with these grant monies, we will be able to purchase equipment to enhance our learning environment.”