



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senate Passes Legislation To Empower Communities Against Criminal Activity

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Senator Young Supports Measure to Keep Children Away from Street Gangs

ALBANY – The State Senate has passed legislation to increase community safety and empower school districts against gang activity. The legislation is the latest effort by the Senate to keep New York’s families and children safe from violence.

Under the programs established by the legislation, new training would be developed to help educators deal with gang related activity in schools and prevent at-risk youth from joining criminal enterprises. The legislation also includes tough new penalties for gang-related crimes, creating felony charges for participation in criminal street gang activity and soliciting minors on school property to participate in a criminal street gang.

“Preventing at-risk young people from falling into the trap of organized criminal activity, like street gangs, is critical to keeping them on the path to becoming productive citizens. Many people mistakenly assume that street gangs are a ‘big city problem,’ but the fact of the matter is street gangs often traffic their dangerous lifestyle into rural communities like ours in a effort to expand their market. Unfortunately, this dynamic can place our children at risk

and ultimately creates a greater danger for unsuspecting residents in the surrounding community,” said Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean).

“By creating a new office specifically focused on preventing the recruitment of young people into gang activity, we are taking a crucial step towards stopping the spread of dangerous street gangs. Establishing training and prevention programs will allow educators to better know how to handle incidents that might arise in their classroom or on school grounds. Our area is not immune to gang activity and passage of this legislation will make our community a safer place to live,” Senator Young continued.

The New York State Criminal Street Gang Act ([S.1701](#)) is a multifaceted approach to preventing gang activity. The legislation makes it a class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison, to solicit minors on school property to participate in a criminal street gang. Solicitation of a minor outside of school property would become a class D felony, punishable by up to seven years in prison. The legislation also establishes a Criminal Street Gang Prevention Fund from which the State Department of Education would create gang prevention programs for schools, giving personnel in-service training and enabling school districts to implement dress codes that restrict gang-related apparel. The Criminal Street Gang and Violence Prevention Partnership would be created to provide services and activities designed to deter at-risk youth from participating in gangs, criminal activity, or violent behavior; and a new Office of Criminal Street Gangs and Youth Violence would be established at the State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The Department of Corrections’ Gang Education and Prevention Program would also begin providing education for inmates concerning the impact and risks associated with gang membership. Finally, the legislation better defines street gangs, criminal street gangs and their patterns of behavior to enhance prosecution.

“The Assembly must take up this critical legislation before more New Yorkers are put at risk,” concluded Senator Young.