



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Melanie's Law, Sponsored by Senator Hinchey, Signed into Law

MICHELLE HINCHEY November 25, 2024



Melanie's Law Will Expand Protections for NY Families Impacted by Domestic Violence

Dutchess County, NY – Senator Michelle Hinchey announced today that Melanie's Law (S.6288/A.6026), legislation she sponsors to expand the jurisdiction of family court to allow orders of protection to cover family members impacted by domestic violence, has been signed into law. Hinchey welcomed Governor Kathy Hochul to Dutchess County on Monday for a bill signing ceremony at Family Services, with Melanie's mother, Cheryl Chianese, local officials, and advocates in attendance, including Senator Rob Rolison, Assemblyman Brian Cunningham, Assemblyman Anil Beephan Jr., Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino,

Poughkeepsie Mayor Yvonne Flowers, Dutchess County District Attorney Anthony Parisi, and Family Service CEO Leah Feldman.

Melanie's Law is named in memory of Melanie Chianese, a 29-year-old mother from Dutchess County who was tragically murdered by her mother's ex-boyfriend. At the time, a protective order was issued for Melanie's mother, but it did not extend to Melanie, exposing a critical gap in criminal procedure law and the Family Court Act. Currently, protective orders can cover domestic violence victims, minors under their care, and individuals deemed in need of protection by a judge. Melanie's Law specifically expands the jurisdiction of the family court so that orders can include relatives of domestic violence victims, ensuring that family members at risk of harm can file their own protective orders.

"Today, thanks to one mother's extraordinary courage and advocacy for change, Melanie's Law, championed by her mom, Cheryl, is now law," said **Senator Michelle Hinchey**. "Domestic violence leaves a trail of trauma that impacts entire families, and when people come forward for help, they deserve a legal system that offers protection and compassion. I'm proud to sponsor Melanie's Law, which will help do that, effectively allowing orders of protection to now extend to relatives of DV victims, providing a vital safeguard for those who often bear the ripple effects of abuse. My deepest thanks go to Cheryl Chianese, who has been a driving force and has not only brought hope to families in crisis but has provided families with a stronger voice in their fight for safety through Melanie's Law."

"Government is about solving problems and protecting people. Today, we did both. The passage of Melanie's Law will finally close a harmful and deadly loophole to legally protect friends, roommates, and family against violent and emotionally abusive abusers,"

Assemblymember Brian Cunningham said. "Now, an abuser cannot escape the rule of law or

redirect the threat of emotional or physical violence toward a survivor and the people they love."

Senator Rob Rolison said, "Today is the culmination of years of advocacy and effort on behalf of victims of abuse. Sunday would have been Melanie's birthday. This critical legislation will finally provide the Chianese family with some measure of closure to their tragedy, protect domestic violence victims, and strengthen New York's criminal laws by closing an unconscionable loophole. As prime co-sponsor of Melanie's Law, I am grateful for the opportunity to help deliver this bill and stand up for victims of abuse across our state."

Assemblymember Anil Beephan Jr. said, "Today, we celebrate Governor Hochul signing Melanie's Law, a monumental step in protecting victims of domestic violence. I want to thank Cheryl for courageously sharing Melanie's story and allowing us to partner with her on this journey to close a dangerous loophole in our judicial system. I also extend my deepest gratitude to my friends and colleagues, Senator Michelle Hinchey, Senator Rob Rolison, and Assemblyman Brian Cunningham, for their steadfast partnership in bringing this bipartisan legislation to life. While this chapter closes, I pray this law will save lives and bring hope to countless families for years to come."

Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino said, "Due to a dangerous loophole in our justice system, Melanie's life was tragically taken from her too soon. It has been a long fight to get 'Melanie's Law' passed, but her mother, Cheryl, has been relentless in her efforts to prevent this tragedy from happening again. Turning tragedy into advocacy, Melanie's Law will save lives, and I can't thank Governor Hochul, Senators Hinchey and Rolison, and Assemblymen Cunningham and Beephan for recognizing the importance of this law and for standing with survivors and their families."

Dutchess County District Attorney Anthony Parisi said, "The impact of abuse is profoundly devastating and extends far beyond individual victims, as highlighted by the tragic loss of Melanie Chianese. The implementation of Melanie's Law represents a significant step forward in providing greater protection for victims, their families, and loved ones. Every individual deserves the fundamental right to live free from fear and violence. I thank Governor Hochul for signing Melanie's Law, bridging the gaps in our current legal framework to prevent future tragedies."

Leah Feldman, CEO of Family Services, said, "We were honored to host the signing of Melanie's Law here at the Family Partnership Center, where critical services are provided 24/7 to survivors of domestic violence. This moment represents a powerful commitment to protecting survivors and preventing domestic violence. We extend our deepest gratitude to Governor Hochul, Senator Hinchey, and all the elected officials who championed this legislation, and Cheryl, whose courage and advocacy in memory of her daughter Melanie is an inspiration to us."

If you or someone you know needs support, help is available. Contact the Center for Victim Safety and Support at Family Services:

- **24/7 Domestic Violence Hotline:** 845-485-5550
- **Text Line:** 845-583-0800
- **Online Chat:** www.resourceconnect.com/cvss/chat

###