



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Hugh T. Farley

Juvenile Justice Task Force Conduct Public Forum Examining Policy Shift Within NYS Juvenile Justice System That Has Put New Yorkers in Danger

HUGH T. FARLEY June 16, 2010

| ISSUE: **JUVENILE CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



State Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I - Schenectady) and members of a Senate Republican Task Force on Juvenile Justice reform today held a public forum to investigate growing concerns among community members, youth facility staff and law enforcement officials that newly-implemented policies set forth within New York State's juvenile justice system

have resulted in escalating violence by juvenile offenders that has put New Yorkers in danger.

Senator Farley said, " Leadership of the Office of Children and Family Services has failed to respond to concerns about the safety of staff at juvenile justice facilities, as well as the safety of communities. This public forum will help us to identify these problems, and to call attention to the need for action to address these important concerns."

Chair of the Task Force, Senator Catherine Young (R,I,C-Olean), said, "We continue to uncover information that links OCFS Commissioner Carrion and her newly-instituted policies to the increased violence for both youths and staff at facilities across the state, and for the community at large. We can't continue to sit idly by as this system continues to spin out-of-control. I believe this forum will help us to further investigate reports of violent youths being released prematurely into less secure settings where they have murdered and viciously assaulted community members, and of numerous attacks by youths against OCFS staffers who work at our state-run facilities."

The public forum entitled, "Failure: Examining the Juvenile Justice System in New York State," featured testimony from security officers and other OCFS staffers from Tryon Residential Center, Lansing Residential Center, Brookwood Secure and Goshen Secure Center all of whom have witnessed or experienced incidents of youth violence within the juvenile justice system. Fulton County District Attorney Louise K. Sira and family and colleagues of New Yorkers who been attacked and murdered by youth in state care also shared their testimony with the Task Force. OCFS Commissioner Carrion and another representative from Governor Paterson's Administration were also invited to testify but declined.

Testimony heard at the public forum will help the Task Force to develop potential solutions to restore accountability within the state's juvenile justice system and make it safer for youth, staff and our communities.

A number of disturbing examples of youth violence at OCFS-licensed or run facilities were discussed at the hearing, including:

In June 2009, Youth Counselor Renee Greco, 24, was brutally beaten to death by two teenage residents who had been prematurely released from more secure state facilities. Greco was the sole supervisor of six male residents at a community youth home in Lockport, New York at the time of her murder.

In February 2009, 23-year-old Rochester Police Officer Anthony DiPonzio was shot in the head by a juvenile who was AWOL from a private residential community placement facility.

In July 2008, Charles Loftly, a worker at the state-operated Tryon Residential Center in Johnstown, New York suffered a stroke and died a month after he was struck in the head with a 2 x 4 by two residents attempting to escape. Months after the incident, several employees sought and obtained orders of protection so they could come to work.

Members of the Task Force include Senators George D. Maziarz, Joseph Robach, Mike Nozzolio, Marty Golden, Bill Larkin, Dale Volker and John Bonacic.