



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Senator Golden Would Toughen Accountability Measures for Child Protection Cases; Will Save Lives

MARTIN J. GOLDEN April 5, 2011

In an effort to ensure that abused children in protective custody are truly being protected, Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn) announced that he will introduce legislation to require child protective caseworkers to take a photograph when they make a visit to a child in the child protective services (CPS) system for abuse and neglect.

“People are sick over reading recent news reports about a caseworker who falsified home visits,” Senator Golden said. “This appalling behavior leaves children open to even more violence and abuse. While the vast majority of caseworkers tackle their difficult jobs with pride and dignity each day, the bad apples are allowing our children to die.”

This bill will put a much needed safeguard into the process.” Senator Golden said. “In addition, it will help supervisors spot poor and fraudulent record keeping. This is a solution that is easy to implement and should be current practice.”

Under Golden’s proposal, the photo of the child must be taken and entered into the case record along with the caseworker’s notes and findings for that visit., Florida implemented a similar system recently after more than seventy Florida child welfare workers were caught lying about their home visits.

A severely malnourished and abused 4-year-old girl was found dead in her Brooklyn apartment last month. Marchella Pierce weighed just 18 pounds. She died of drug poisoning, blunt-impact injuries, malnutrition and dehydration. Police say the girl's mother tied her daughter to a bed inside their apartment and battered her with household items. She also deprived her of food and water.

An investigation revealed that Damon Adams, the caseworker monitoring the Brett-Pierce case, and Chereece Bell, his supervisor, hadn't checked on Marchella's progress in the three months leading up to her death. After the girl died, the two allegedly post-dated reports to make it appear that they had visited the Brett-Pierce home on a regular basis. Adams and Bell were indicted this month on charges of criminally negligent homicide.

"Two years ago we enacted Nixzmary's Law, after Nixzmary Brown, the battered 7-year-old who was tortured and killed," Senator Golden said. "We were told that there would be changes following Nixmary's death, but once again we are asking that something be done to stop innocent children from being tortured and beaten to death. This bill is a common-sense approach to better protecting children."