



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Acts to Protect New York's Most Vulnerable Children and Adults

DEAN G. SKELOS May 24, 2011

Measure Spurred by the Murder of Western New York Resident Laura Cummings

The New York State Senate today passed a measure to prevent child and adult abuse and expand the authority of protective workers to enable full investigations into allegations of abuse. The bill (S.3306B), is sponsored by Senator George Maziarz (R-C, Newfane) due to the murder and abuse of Laura Cummings, a mentally and physically challenged young adult from Erie County.

Twenty-three-year-old Laura Cummings was murdered last year by her mother and suffered a lifetime of physical, mental, and sexual abuse by her mother and half-brother. The abuse was reported to Social Services officials on numerous occasions but no actions were taken to prevent the terrible conditions Laura endured.

"The system failed Laura Cummings," Senator Maziarz said. "Somehow, someone should have been able to step inside this home and put a stop to the constant terror Laura faced. This law will offer greater protections for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. If these provisions had been in place, Laura would be alive today."

"This bill is a sensible step to further protect our children and adults from abuse," Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. "We need to act now to ensure that Child and Adult

Protective Services officials have the authority and obligation to fully investigate abuse complaints so that Laura Cummings did not die in vain and tragedies like her murder and life-long mistreatment will be prevented in the future.”

The measure improves government response and crucial access to children and impaired adults who may be victims of abuse by enhancing the investigative authority of Child and Adult Protective Services. It would ensure that repeated reports of serious abuse of children or impaired adults are fully investigated by allowing officials entry to the place where abuse is alleged and, if individuals interfere with abuse investigations by restricting access to the premises, charge those individuals with a class A misdemeanor. The bill also enables Child and Adult Protective Services to share important information about reports of abuse and other relevant records.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.