



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

Senator Nozzolio Announces “Renee’s Law” Introduced in State Senate

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 3, 2011

| ISSUE: **JUVENILE CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

New York State Senator Mike Nozzolio is co-sponsoring legislation that was introduced in the State Senate today to provide greater protection and disclosure to employees of facilities where dangerous juvenile delinquents and youthful offenders are placed. The legislation is known as “Renee’s Law”, for 24-year-old Renee Greco, who was brutally murdered two years ago while supervising troubled teenagers at a group home.

“As a co-sponsor of Renee’s Law, I believe this legislation is critical to protecting the safety of the men and women who work in New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) facilities and preventing future tragedies from occurring,” said Senator Nozzolio . “By giving staff at these facilities access to the records of the youths in their care, this legislation will reform our juvenile justice system. I commend Senator Catharine Young and Senator George Maziarz for introducing this legislation to honor Renee Greco’s memory by ensuring the circumstances that lead to her death never happen again.”

Senator Nozzolio serves as Chairman of the Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, which will review and vote on Renee’s Law next week. The legislation is expected to be approved by the Committee.

On June, 8 2009, Renee Greco was the sole supervisor of six males at the Avenue House for troubled youths in Lockport, New York. Two of the juveniles placed a blanket over Renee’s head and beat her to death with a wooden table leg while she sat at a table playing cards with other residents. Ms. Greco was not informed of either youth's prior crimes or actions within facilities.

This tragedy was one of numerous instances of violence in juvenile facilities that have resulted from dangerous policies initiated by OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrion, which allow violent youths to be released prematurely from heavily supervised facilities into less

secure residential homes where they have viciously assaulted community members and attacked staffers.

“Commissioner Carrion’s approach is clearly not working. Her reckless policies and lack of oversight have endangered the lives of the men and women who work in the State’s OCFS facilities and made our streets and communities less safe,” said Senator Nozzolio. “Renee’s Law is critical to addressing the inadequate concern for the safety of staff at OCFS before another young life is lost.”

Along with ensuring that staff receive expanded training such as classes in staff abuse prevention and identification, child abuse and maltreatment prevention, gang awareness, and conflict resolution, “Renee’s Law” also would hold the Commissioner of OCFS personally responsible for ensuring training mandates are met.

Staff also would be mandated to report to local law enforcement a youth’s criminal activity while in their care and would be protected under the state’s whistleblower law to come forward.

The bill requires that a youth’s criminal record be shared with all staff responsible for the care of youth in their custody and with any foster parents of youths placed in their care after the youth is release from OCFS custody.

Local law enforcement also would have access to a youth’s records and a provision in the bill would require OCFS to notify local police departments no less than ten days before a youth is placed within their jurisdiction.

Among the key provisions in the legislation is the establishment of a multi-tiered risk assessment system that requires OCFS to take into account the severity of the youth’s original crime, their behavior while in an OCFS facility, and other mitigating factors prior to the youth being placed into less secure OCFS-run facilities or privately operated residential homes.

Additionally, “Renee’s Law” would require a police officer to accompany an employee of a program, upon request, to an AWOL youth’s home and assist in retrieving such youth.