



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Bonacic

## Senate Acts Again on Bonacic's Child Abuse Reporting Legislation

JOHN J. BONACIC June 12, 2012

### **1998 Murder Prompted Loud Local Calls for Change but No Action in State Assembly**

Legislation (S.6115) sponsored by State Senator John J. Bonacic (R/C/I – Mt. Hope), which would require reports made to the State's Child Abuse hotline to be investigated, when made by mandated reporters such as physicians, social workers, or law enforcement, has again cleared the State Senate with wide, bi-partisan support.

The legislation was initially prompted after the 1998 murder of 3 year old Christopher Gardner of Bloomingburg. Before he was killed, a mandated reporter had, according to multiple published reports in the Times Herald Record called the child abuse hotline claiming the child had been abused, but nobody followed up.

"This bill stands for the simple proposition that when a doctor, social worker or law enforcement official calls the child abuse hotline, and indicates they believe abuse is occurring, somebody in an office somewhere does not decide to overrule that trained expert," Senator Bonacic said.

After the 1998 murder, groups sprang up around the Hudson Valley to lobby for stronger laws and better protect children. Parents lobbied Albany for the changes, but the Assembly

refused to act. In fact, the then Assembly Chairman, according to a 2010 Times Herald Record article, grossly misunderstood the nature of the mandated reporter system.

Bonacic said he believed the case involving Christopher Gardner was an anomaly, but that it was one anomaly too many. “I know that the people who work at the child abuse hotlines are not simply faceless bureaucrats. They are human and I am sure they care about their job and children. They can also make mistakes though. Unfortunately, the nature of the mistake made in 1998 may have cost a child his life. We will never know for sure, but we can take an extra step by ensuring that reports made by trained professionals are in fact investigated,” Senator Bonacic said.

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