



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Says Now-Approved Bill Gives Courts Stronger Power to Revoke Parental Rights in Cases of Severe or Repeat Child Abuse

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 3, 2013

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*Senate, Assembly pass bill to strengthen courts' ability to protect children by streamlining process required to revoke parental rights after severe or repeat abuse. Bill now heads to Governor to be signed into law.*

*Kennedy: After taking this important step to protect children, now it's time to pass Jay J.'s Law and ensure those who hurt children end up behind bars for a long, long time.*

BUFFALO, NY – Under new legislation ([A.2600](#) | [S.4082](#)) approved by the Senate and Assembly, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, said it will be easier for the courts to protect children who have survived abuse at the hands of their own parents. Kennedy explained the bill strengthens the authority of family courts to revoke parental rights from individuals who severely or repeatedly abuse their children.

In cases of the most severe or repeat abuse, children will soon experience a far shorter path and a more efficient process to be permanently placed with safe, stable families. Essentially, the bill expedites the process of placing children in new homes.

"Keeping children safe must always remain the top priority of our state," Kennedy said.

"Until this legislation becomes law, the courts will continue to have their hands tied when

seeking to protect kids from violent, abusive parents and placing them in safe, stable homes. The bill we pushed through the Legislature will help ensure state law is focused on protecting children and survivors of abuse, not protecting those who hurt children.”

Now that the Senate and Assembly have approved the measure, it goes to the Governor for his signature.

In the past, New York’s family courts have been required to provide the highest level of proof and cite a restrictive list of qualifying offenses during parental rights’ proceedings. It was a burdensome, slow process that ended up leaving kids in a state of limbo, in-and-out-of different care settings. Children who suffered abuse were forced to endure a delayed process and the emotionally-straining circumstances of uncertainty and an absence of permanency.

The law was previously updated to allow the courts to terminate parental rights for severe or repeated abuse, but the grounds of severe or repeated abuse has not often been used because of the difficulties of proof remaining in legal statute.

This new legislation expands the ability of the courts to revoke parental rights from individuals who have committed or allowed others to commit sexually predatory acts against a child. It updates legal definitions to ensure those who violently abuse children lose parental rights and the children are permanently moved to safe families.

Now that the Legislature has taken action on this important bill to protect children, Kennedy is urging his colleagues to finally **approve Jay J.’s Law, which is a much-needed law to crackdown on severe and repeat child abuse**. Jay J’s Law will enact far stronger penalties against repeat abusers. Kennedy is pushing to get the legislation approved before the end of this year’s legislative session.

“Children who have suffered abuse are relying on us to stand up for them and help them secure justice,” Kennedy said. “The state took an important step in the right direction with this legislation, and now we need to pass Jay J.’s Law and ensure those who hurt children end up behind bars for a long, long time.”

Senator Kennedy also fought hard during this year’s budget process to restore **funding to the Court-Appointed Special Advocates** (CASA) program, which provides advocates for abused and neglected children in foster care and the family courts system.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*