



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

# **City Sides with Staten Island Elected Officials on Willowbrook Juvenile Detention Center**

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Borough President James Oddo (R-Staten Island), Senator Andrew Lanza (R-Staten Island), Assemblyman Cusick (D-Staten Island) and Councilman Steven Matteo (R-Staten Island), announced today that the City Administration for Children Services (ACS) has scrapped their original plan for a juvenile justice residential site proposal. Under the original proposal, teenage boys convicted of crimes would have been housed in a “limited-secure” placement (LSP) facility at 1133 Forest Hill Road, Willowbrook.

In a letter received by elected officials dated July 30th from Commissioner Gladys Carrion, Esq., ACS now intends to use the residence for “non-secure” placement (NSP) of girls; this makes the plan similar to the current mutually agreeable facility that has been housed in the community for decades. The program will be governed by foster care regulations for youth that were served over the past several decades under the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) before being

closed last year. The Commissioner further explained that the facility will be run by the Children's Village and will maintain a low staff-to-youth ratio with close monitoring and supervision. A community advisory board will be created and will meet quarterly in addition to communicating with Community Board 2, local police precincts and other groups.

Since the original proposal was first announced back in the fall of 2013, the outcry from local residents has been huge. Then Councilman Oddo, Assemblyman Cusick, and Senator Lanza organized a meeting in which 250 residents showed up to voice their strong opposition for a juvenile detention center in their

neighborhood. Prior to that meeting, a contentious, but brief meeting was held at Community Board 2.

Borough President James Oddo stated, "We urged Willowbrook residents at the meeting in Young Israel last Fall to be patient as we continued to fight behind the scenes against this ill-conceived proposal, which would have had a devastating effect on this community. While it's true that we can't win every battle, it is especially gratifying when we are able to prevent a plan that would have such a negative effect on the community from occurring. Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayor Barrios-Paoli, and Commissioner Carrion deserve our thanks for coming through on this issue."

"This is welcoming news. It just didn't make sense to house teens convicted of crimes in a "limited-secure" setting in a residential neighborhood. The City's about-face decision proves there is strength in numbers. All of the elected officials came together with the residents of Willowbrook to not only oppose, but to continue to make the City aware of their concerns. In working with the Staten Island elected officials the de Blasio administration saw that the original proposal was not a good fit for the Willowbrook Community. Staten Islanders have shown once again that working together we can accomplish what's good for our community," said Assemblyman Cusick.

"The community spoke and city government listened," said Senator Lanza "The original plan to place teenagers convicted of crimes, primarily from other boroughs, in a "limited secure" facility in the middle of a residential area on Staten Island was just too close for comfort. I thank Assemblyman Cusick and the other elected officials and residents who fought against this ill-conceived proposal."

Councilman Matteo stated, “This is a tremendous victory for the Willowbrook community. From day one, there was no doubt that the proposed ‘Close-to-Home’ facility was completely inappropriate for a residential neighborhood, and I am proud to have stood shoulder to shoulder with the community and my elected colleagues as we worked with the Administration to resolve this issue. I hope that area residents will sleep a little easier with the knowledge that their neighborhood remains a safe place to raise a family.”

The lawmakers agreed that returning the site to a “non-secure” facility for girls, as it was previously, was the right decision and they extended their thanks to Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Gladys Carrion for listening to their concerns and the concerns of the Willowbrook community.