



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

State Budget Addresses Local Opioid Crisis

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ISSUE:

- [Health](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Hospitals](#)
- [Budget](#)

Improvements coming to WCA that will increase addiction treatment services, alleviate jail overcrowding

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) has delivered a \$350,000 capital grant in the state budget to establish a supportive housing program at WCA Hospital’s Jones Hill site in Jamestown.

“The new program will be a big step towards addressing the region’s opioid and heroin epidemic, placing people with addiction problems in a specialized housing facility instead of the county jail,” Senator Young said.

“Our jail should not be used as a primitive detox facility for people grappling with mental health concerns and addiction. It isn’t good for those who are struggling and need services, and it isn’t good for taxpayers,” she said.

“The sad passing of Christin Tibbetts put a face on the human tragedy of addiction. Her father has said the only relief Christin and their family found was when she was placed in the county’s jail. People need a path for rehabilitation and treatment,” said Senator Young.

The Senator, who chairs the Senate’s Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee, said she was struck with the idea during a recent state budget hearing on housing. More than \$124.5 million in funding is available statewide for the NY/NY IV supportive housing program.

“I asked state agency officials whether these supportive housing funds could be used for those with addiction problems. They said such a project already existed. I contacted County Executive Vince Horigan after the hearing, who helped marshal local leaders and service providers to get behind a supportive housing program,” she said.

“A stumbling block was that the supportive housing fund pays for operations and not capital expenses. That’s why I pushed for the \$350,000 grant to be included in the state budget,” Senator Young said.

Southern Tier Environments for Living Inc. (STEL), a private, non-profit agency that has been providing rehabilitative and support services to people with psychiatric disabilities in Erie, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany Counties for over 30 years, is working on developing a new program for supportive housing for the mentally ill and those with chemical abuse disorders who have entered the corrections system in Chautauqua County.

As its mission, the new program will assist individuals with mental health concerns in acquiring the skills necessary to integrate into the community, provide an environment designed to actively involve those suffering from addiction in the rehabilitation and recovery process, and develop a system of supports and services that will allow those individuals to sustain lawful post-release community residency.

Senator Young said she will personally advocate for the supportive housing project to make it through the final approval process.

“This initiative will help alleviate overcrowding at the county jail that is costing local taxpayers about \$1 million annually because the overflow of inmates are boarded out at other facilities. It will give people struggling with addiction alternatives to incarcerations,” she said.