



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Senators Ortt, Young, Funke, and Croci Announce \$4.6 Million in Additional Funding for Rape and Sexual Violence Programs

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In recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, New York State Senators Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda), Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean), Rich Funke (R,C,I – Fairport), and Thomas Croci (R – Sayville) today announced that they succeeded in securing an additional \$4.6 million in funding in the 2015-16 state budget to help victims of rape and sexual violence.

The Senators led a bipartisan group of members from the Republican and Independent Democratic Conferences in efforts to secure a total of nearly \$6.5 million in state funding for rape crisis services for victims and programs that prevent sexual assault.

Senator Ortt, chairman of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Committee, said, "Sexual assault acts are horrific crimes that take significant mental, physical, and emotional tolls on the victims. In the immediate aftermath of such trauma, rape crisis centers offer immediate help to those at their most vulnerable. This funding will ensure that these critical services will continue."

Senator Young said, "Traumatized sexual assault victims desperately need to have the services and support that are provided by rape crisis centers. A significant loss in funding would have crippled the centers, forcing them to lay off staff and dramatically scale back a range of proven programs. With the funding secured in this year's budget, we can feel confident that no crisis centers will need to be closed and survivors of rape and sexual assault will continue to receive the compassionate and professional help they need and deserve."

Senator Funke said, "The most important thing we can do for victims of sexual assault is ensure that a comprehensive team of experts stands ready and willing to deliver vital support services right away. In a perfect world, these services would never be needed – but we know they all too often are, and I'm proud we were able to secure nearly \$6.5 million to support the centers, victims, and survivors alike."

Senator Croci said, "The additional funding my colleagues and I were able to secure will provide critically needed support for sexual assault victims services. I've had the privilege of working closely with many agencies on Long Island, and I'm inspired by their tireless commitment to justice, healing, and recovery for victims. Many of the dedicated community organizations providing these services are struggling financially, and these additional dollars will help make sure victims will have the help they need."

Rape crisis centers provide victims and survivors of sexual assault with access to a multidisciplinary team of experts who serve as advocates that can offer crisis intervention, counseling, and the options of forensic evidence collection and police reports. Victims and survivors have reported that when a rape crisis advocate is present, they experience less distress from contact with the police and medical

personnel, as well as fewer psychological and physical health issues.

In February, fourteen Senators wrote to Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos to request a restoration of proposed budget cuts and a substantial increase in funding to rape crisis services and sexual violence prevention programs. The Executive budget had proposed \$1.88 million for the state's Office of Victim Services rape crisis program.

The enacted budget reflected the Senators' efforts by including \$4.6 million on top of the Executive proposal to increase access to critical services for vulnerable victims in more New York communities.