



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

Senate Passes Bills to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Martin J. Golden

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The New York State Senate today passed two measures to strengthen protections for victims of domestic violence and children at risk of abuse. The bills would create new safeguards for victims who testify against their abusers in court, as well as establish a commission to study and recommend methods of preventing child abuse in New York.

Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (R-C-I East Northport) said, “The Senate is continuing to take important steps to improve protections for our state’s most vulnerable women and children with the passage of the bills today and the measures already approved in the Senate’s Women’s Equality Agenda. We continue to wait for Assembly action on three women’s equality bills, including one that prevents housing discrimination of domestic violence victims, but I am hopeful the Assembly will act before the end of session for the well-being of New York’s women and families.”

Statistics show that violent attacks against women are often committed by their domestic partners or someone close to them. As a result, these individuals fear

reprisal and are less likely to testify against their abusers in court.

The Senate approved legislation (S3087), sponsored by Senator Catharine Young (R-C-I, Olean), allowing domestic violence victims to testify in the physical absence of their abusers by using closed-circuit television. By offering an alternate forum for victims of domestic violence to serve as witnesses, the legislation seeks to facilitate their willingness to come forward.

Senator Young said, “Many domestic violence victims fear retribution from their attacker if they choose to pursue charges against them. With statistics showing only 48 percent of victims report their attacks to authorities, allowing a domestic violence victim to be designated as a ‘vulnerable witness’, thus allowing their testimony to be given via closed-circuit TV, will encourage more victims to come forward and confront their abusers. Fostering a safe environment for victims that allows them to confront their attacker and fight for justice will ensure they take an important step toward becoming domestic violence survivors.”

In addition, the Senate passed a bill (S824), sponsored by Senator Martin Golden (R-C-I, Brooklyn), that would establish a temporary state commission to study child abuse prevention and make recommendations for implementing child abuse prevention programs statewide.

Senator Golden said, “There is no place in our homes, schools, or society for child abuse, and the unfortunate reality is that it is happening all too often in New York. I introduced this legislation because it is time that we stand up against child abuse and make prevention a priority. Reports indicate that there are approximately 80,000 children found to be victims of child abuse and maltreatment in New York State each year. We must figure out how to reverse this trend that is damaging many families.”

The tragic deaths of children across the state, including Abdifatah Mohamud and Eain Clayton Brooks in Western New York, Myls Dobson in New York City, and, most recently, Kenneth White in Albany County, have brought attention to potential deficiencies in laws put in place to protect vulnerable children.

Research has demonstrated that programs focusing on educating and training new and future parents are the most practical and cost-effective means of preventing child abuse and neglect. Child abuse prevention also addresses other aspects of family dynamics that threaten children’s well-being, including preventable health

conditions such as low birth weight, infant mortality, and drug-addicted babies.

Despite their success, child abuse prevention programs are currently only available to a small number of eligible at-risk families. In addition, a study found that the state spends approximately \$2.4 billion each year on the consequences of child abuse, including incarceration, court costs, and foster care. By examining the accessibility of prevention programs, as well as strategies for expanding these services to more families across the state, the temporary commission would more effectively protect children while saving the state considerable fiscal resources.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.