



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senator Sets Forth Legislative Effort to Improve Child Protective Services

CATHARINE YOUNG May 22, 2015

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*OCFS asked to review records for any calls prior to the death of Nayla Hodnett*

ALBANY – With the perpetrator still at-large following a year-long investigation into the tragic passing of Nayla Hodnett, Senator Catharine M. Young (R,C,I-Olean) is doing her part to help raise awareness about the case and bring new details to light.

In a letter to the Acting Commissioner of the State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Senator Young has asked Commissioner Sheila Poole to review the records of the State's Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment regarding allegations or incidents of possible abuse to Nayla prior to her passing.

The Senator has also put forward several legislative efforts to improve the state's existing child abuse reporting system.

“My heart breaks for this beautiful little girl and her family. Young children like Nayla are the most vulnerable among us and her case truly pulls at the heartstrings,” said Senator Young.

“The Chautauqua County District Attorney, the Chautauqua County Office of Children and Family Services, and the state are working to secure justice since Nayla’s tragic passing. Regrettably, whomever inflicted the deadly blows to this child remains free and they must be held accountable. With my letter to Acting Commissioner Poole, I am hopeful new light can be shed on this case, and new insight might aid District Attorney Foley in his efforts,” said Senator Young.

“This tragic incident has also highlighted several gaps in the current system which I am working to address through legislative action. While these actions won’t bring Nayla back, we can take steps to prevent such heartbreak from striking another family,” Senator Young said.

Under the current system, mandatory reporters including physician, registered nurses, social workers, and others are required to report suspected incidents of abuse or maltreatment to the Statewide Central Registry for Abuse and Maltreatment. The central registry then coordinates these reports with the corresponding county.

In an effort to address cracks in the existing system highlighted by the case, Senator Young has authored legislation that would require mandatory reporters take a free online refresher course offered by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services once a year to keep them up-to-date on signs of abuse or maltreatment and current reporting standards.

The Senator has also co-sponsored legislation that would require calls made to the central register be recorded, and that the audio files be made part of any report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

“We best honor Nayla by bringing positive change for the children of our great state and bringing whomever harmed her to justice. I will be doing all I can to spur action to improve the system and ensure that any new details are made available to the District Attorney’s office,” Senator Young said.

Anyone with additional information on the case is asked to contact Chautauqua County District Attorney David Foley at 716-753-4241.

A copy of the letter sent by Senator Young to the Acting Commissioner of OCFS can be found attached.