



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Senate Passes Sanders' Missing Persons Bill

JAMES SANDERS JR. June 14, 2016



The New York State Senate today unanimously passed, by a vote of 61-0, legislation introduced by Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village), which would require police agencies to immediately file a report when an adult is reported missing, regardless of age.

The bill (S6437A) known as LaMont Dottin's Law would also call for these agencies to file an electronic report with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Register if the missing person is not found within 24 hours. Previously, such actions were only taken for missing children or vulnerable adults.

LaMont Dottin was 19 years old when he disappeared from St. Albans on October 16, 1995. His mother, Dr. Arnita Fowler, tried to report him as missing right away, but due to police regulations she had to wait until November 13, 1995. Dr. Fowler continued to search for her son for five years, only to discover that he had been found dead six days after she had reported him missing and that he had been buried in an unmarked grave in a potter's field.

"This legislation could potentially save lives and prevent future heartache for the families of loved ones who go missing," Senator Sanders said. "No one should have to experience the pain that LaMont Dottin's family experienced. Having police agencies file an electronic report within 24 hours of a person's disappearance, not only for children and the elderly, but all people, is a common sense safety measure that would positively impact residents across New York State."

A companion bill (A9957) has been introduced in the Assembly by Assembly Member Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn). It was also passed today, and now it will go on to Governor Cuomo to be signed into law.

The previous version of this bill was vetoed by the governor, who cited compliance concerns with the NCIC database because reports were to be filed even when circumstances did not indicate a missing adult was in danger. This version of the bill outlines several situations under which a report shall be filed, including but not limited to physical danger, mirroring the parameters of the NCIC database.