



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders, Barron, Advocates Celebrate Enactment of Missing Adults Law

JAMES SANDERS JR. November 7, 2016



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) today joined Assembly Member Charles Barron (D-Brooklyn) in celebrating the enactment of the Missing Adults Law they sponsored in the legislature with a press conference at City Hall.

The new Missing Adults Law, which will take effect statewide tomorrow, mandates police agencies to file a report when an adult is reported missing. Previously, this action was only required in cases involving children ages 18 and under and vulnerable adults.

"This is a tremendous victory for families across the state," Sanders said. "Now when one of our loved ones goes missing, we will have the peace of mind that police will investigate."

The Missing Adults Law will require police to submit reports of missing adults to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database when the adult has a proven disability, may be in physical danger, is missing after a catastrophe, may have disappeared involuntarily, or is missing under circumstances where there is a reasonable concern for his or her safety.

"I want to let all families know, particularly black families, that when you go to the precinct, they must look for your missing loved ones," Barron said. "They must do that immediately – that is what this bill is saying. Today, on Black Solidarity Day, it's a very significant day to convey that."

The Missing Adults Law, also known as LaMont Dottin's Law, is named after a 19-year old who disappeared from St. Albans, Queens on October 19, 1995. His mother, Dr. Arnita Fowler, searched 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.

Dr. Fowler has been a fierce advocate for the law, and has worked on behalf of missing persons as the founder and CEO of the LaMont Dottin Foundation. Today, Fowler wiped away tears as she detailed the long struggle from the tragedy of her son's death to the victory of the Missing Adults Law being enacted.

"My heart was broken, but every day I woke up and put one foot in front of the other,"

Fowler said at the press conference. "Life did not stop, and life does not stop for people who have missing loved ones. I thank God for giving me the strength to endure this journey. "

Council Member Inez Barron (D-Brooklyn) praised Dr. Fowler for her immense strength.

"We appreciate your courage," she said. "We appreciate your determination. Even though you son's life was lost, you understood the pain you felt was being felt by other families and you used that to propel yourself forward to make sure that other families got the measure of justice and attention and support in searching for their missing loved ones."

Council Member I. Daneek Miller (D-St.Albans) expressed similar sentiments.

"It was a long road but now, because of Dr. Fowler's great advocacy, families of missing persons will be able to receive the support and information about their loved ones they deserve," Miller said "I want to thank her and everyone who advocated for this law making today possible."

A former version of the Missing Adult legislation passed both houses of the legislature in 2015, but was vetoed by Governor Cuomo over concerns that it was framed too broadly to comply with the NCIC database. It was rewritten with language mirroring the parameters of the database this year, when it passed the Senate 61-0 and the Assembly 130-12.