



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

Senator Gallivan Calls on Governor and Office of Mental Health to Keep WNY Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca

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Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma) and Assemblymember Michael Kearns (D, West Seneca) joined members of the WNY State Legislature Delegation in calling on Governor Cuomo and the Office of Mental Health to keep the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center at its current location in West Seneca. Despite bipartisan objections from members of the WNY Legislature Delegation and families served by the center, the State Office of Mental Health is moving ahead with its plans to close the facility and transfer adolescent patients to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center.

Senator Gallivan and Assemblymember Kearns have learned the state is prepared to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to move forward with its relocation plans. The legislators are urging residents to call the Office of Mental Health and the Governor's Office to voice opposition to the project.

"Efforts by the Office of Mental Health to close this center and move these patients to an adult oriented facility like the Buffalo Psychiatric Center make no sense," Gallivan said. "I have worked with families of patients, mental health experts and others who believe such a move will jeopardize the mental health and wellbeing of children who receive care at the West Seneca location. These adolescent patients deserve and require special treatment in an environment that allows them and their families to feel safe and comfortable."

The Buffalo Psychiatric Center stopped treating children more than 40 years ago when doctors determined that adolescents have specific and special needs when it comes to mental health treatment. That is why the WNY Children's Psychiatric Center was built. The West Seneca facility opened in 1970 and serves patients from at least 17 New York counties.

"It is not a difficult decision to permanently keep this facility in West Seneca," said Assemblymember Kearns. "On virtually every metric this institution excels and exceeds other similar institutions in New York State. WNYCPC has the lowest 30 and 90 day readmission rates in all of New York State. This is important from a long term cost perspective because readmissions for mental health case over the course of a lifetime can result in many thousands of dollars for the treatment of a single person. The savings to New York State are long term and real. Not keeping the facility in this setting is pennywise and pound foolish, because it overlooks the long term savings and the input and voices of those treated by the state and surroundings."

During a 2015 public hearing on the proposed move, parents, former patients, family members of patients, workers, community activists and academics spoke out against plans presented by the Office of Mental Health. Many said the tranquil surrounding provided at the West Seneca campus is important for the children who are undergoing significant mental trauma and the families desperately trying to protect these children from danger.

Support for keeping the West Seneca facility open is strong among members of the WNY State Legislature Delegation and other local officials.

"Western New York Children's campus is a tranquil environment where children receive the individualized, wrap-around services required to treat complicated adolescent challenges," said Senator Rob Ortt, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Mental Health. Buffalo Psychiatric Center is an entirely separate institution - in its layout and its mission - so we are alarmed over the prospect of co-mingling children with an adult population. Our foremost concern is, and must remain, children facing severe emotional, psychological, and physical trauma. I will continue to fight alongside my state colleagues in support of keeping these vulnerable children where they belong - in a safe environment surrounded by their peers and out of an adult psychiatric facility."

"I am deeply disappointed that Governor Cuomo and the Office of Mental Health is pushing forward to move the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center. Local officials, parents and families have strongly objected to placing children with adult patients and expressed serious safety concerns. I urge Governor Cuomo and the Office of Mental Health to halt this plan and keep our Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca," said Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer.

"The WNY Children's Psychiatric Center should permanently remain in West Seneca," said Assemblymember Robin Schimminger. "The children treated there belong in West Seneca, a place that is peaceful, rural and therapeutic. Healing is best achieved in a setting where children are among their peers and where both they and their families feel the most secure. The state needs to make a permanent decision to keep these children in the place that will bring the most stability to their turbulent lives. They deserve the best treatment possible, and I firmly believe the best treatment means staying in West Seneca."

"To say we are disappointed, frustrated and extremely concerned with the unfortunate planning that is underway would be an understatement," said West Seneca Supervisor Sheila Meegan. "Time and time again Albany officials continue to make decisions that impact Western New York without truly understanding the impact it will have on so many families. The timing of this RFP couldn't have been more insensitive."

"Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center provides vital services to children from counties across our region," said Assemblymember-Elect Mike Norris. "Our leaders in Albany must provide a voice to the voiceless and stand shoulder to shoulder with our most at risk and vulnerable citizens. I urge Governor Cuomo to reconsider his plans to consolidate this facility into the downtown Buffalo adult center for the sake of the many families that benefit from services provided here. The family environment and excellent service of this center is what gives families hope, and we will continue to urge the Governor to keep this facility open."