



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senator Murphy Announces State's Swift Action In Response To Latest Incident At Hawthorne Cedar Knolls

TERRENCE MURPHY May 8, 2017

| ISSUE: **HAWTHORNE CEDAR KNOLLS, MT. PLEASANT, SPECIAL ACT SCHOOLS, OCFS**



ALBANY, NY – The controversial Hawthorne Cedar Knolls Special Act School will immediately halt student intake, Senator Terrence Murphy announced today.

On May 23rd of last year, Senator Terrence Murphy sent a letter to Sheila Poole, the Commissioner of the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), pleading for assistance in regards to troubling reports from both Hawthorne Cedar Knolls and the Pleasantville Cottage School.

Subsequently, a number of meetings were held in response to the Senator's letter, prompting increased security policies and procedures at the school. In recent weeks, a wave of public

incidents have reignited concern throughout the community, prompting swift action from OCFS which includes an immediate and indefinite closure of intake for the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls facility effective immediately.

New York State Senator Terrence Murphy said, “I thank and applaud Commissioner Poole for acknowledging the serious concerns of Mt. Pleasant residents and for taking this swift and decisive action. We have worked incredibly hard to improve the situation at the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls facility, working with its regulatory agencies, local officials and law enforcement. It is my sincere hope that the necessary policies will be properly implemented to provide the services to the kids at the facility while ensuring the safety of its neighbors.”

It was reported last month that four residents of Hawthorne Cedar Knolls attacked a local restaurant owner after refusing to pay their bill. Reports further emerged this weekend that residents of the school assaulted an elderly woman on the platform of the Valhalla Train Station taking money and her cell phone.

In his original letter to OCFS, Senator Murphy had requested intake suspension be implemented unless inspections and unannounced visits were undertaken by the agency. In addition, the Senator proposed a community advisory board be formed to improve communication between the facility and community.

“Working alongside Commissioner Poole we have made some great progress in response to my initial request,” Murphy explained. “Unfortunately, it has become evident that the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls facility continues to experience serious problems despite the best efforts of all parties involved. I hope today’s announcement is a catalyst for the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls administration to implement the important changes which will allow it to coexist with the Mt. Pleasant community.”