



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

SEN. HELMING BACKS BILL TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH CARE, MAKE KENDRA'S LAW PERMANENT

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GENEVA, NY – Senator Helming today announced that the New York State Senate passed legislation that she co-sponsors to strengthen Kendra's Law and make it permanent. This important legislation will help make our communities safer and improve mental health services in the Wayne-Finger Lakes region.

“Access to mental health services in our rural areas is a major concern across the Wayne-Finger Lakes region. I have met with numerous citizens, law enforcement officers, teachers, and medical providers who have shared their personal stories and support for better treatment options and follow-up care. This is especially important in rural and underserved areas. In order to prevent tragedy, we need to address mental health issues early on and make sure that people get the services they need

to keep themselves and our communities safe. We all have a role to play in addressing mental health issues in our society. Working together, we can prevent tragedies and make our communities safer for everyone,” **Senator Helming** said.

Kendra’s Law was first enacted in 1999 following the tragic death of 32-year-old Kendra Webdale, who was shoved in front of a train by a man with untreated schizophrenia. The law helps address the concerns about mentally ill people who are potentially a danger to themselves and society by allowing for court-ordered assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) for individuals who won’t voluntarily seek help.

Since Kendra’s Law was passed, studies have found that patients given mandatory outpatient treatment and who were more violent to begin with were four times less likely to perpetrate serious violence after undergoing AOT. The studies also found fewer psychiatric hospitalizations, shorter lengths of hospitalizations, and declines in criminal activity.

The law is designed to avert serious injury to the mentally ill person or others and close the gaps that currently exist in the present system. This measure makes Kendra’s Law permanent and improves AOT. The legislation requires:

- Follow-up for those who move during the mandated outpatient treatment period to ensure that they receive their treatment;
- Provides for a continuum of care by requiring an assessment for AOT when mental health patients are released from inpatient treatment or incarceration;
- Counties to notify the state Office of Mental Health (OMH) when an assisted outpatient is missing and thereby unavailable for an evaluation as to whether he or she continues to meet AOT criteria; and
- Requires the Commissioner of the Office of Mental Health to develop an educational pamphlet on the AOT process of petitioning, so that family members have information on how to file a report in order to get their loved ones the care that they need.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly for their review and consideration.

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming’s [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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