



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## **Senator Helming: Senate Passes Bills to Reform Parole Hearing Process**

Senator Pam Helming

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GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the New York State Senate recently passed a package of legislation that she supports aimed at preventing violent criminals from being released back into our communities and giving victims and families a stronger voice in the parole board process. The bills include two measures that Senator Helming co-sponsors and that she highlighted during her efforts to oppose the early release for vicious murderer Chad Campbell.

One bill (S.2997-A) would extend the period between parole board hearings from two years to five years in cases where the inmate applying for parole was sentenced for a violent crime. This would give grieving families more time before having to relive their tragedies and reduce the number of times they have to testify at hearings. Another bill (S.6200-A) would allow all family members of a crime victim and all interested parties to make statements to all three panelists during a parole board hearing. Currently, only immediate family members are invited to make statements, and only one parole board member is required to hear their testimony.

“I learned about these two pieces of legislation through family members of Cindy Lewis and Curtis Rizzo, the teenage babysitter and toddler brutally stabbed to death by Chad Campbell 28 years ago. I have seen and heard firsthand the pain and suffering that these family members still feel over the loss of their loved ones. The tremendous burden of reliving this real-life nightmare every two years to ensure that he is never released in our community has taken a toll on the families. This critical legislation would give families five years of reprieve between parole board hearings. It would also expand the definition of family members, giving grandparents an opportunity to share their feelings at the hearing. I am pleased my Senate colleagues passed these two measures, and I am hopeful the Assembly and the Governor will do the same so that we can bring justice to victims and their families,” Senator Helming said.

Also among the Senate’s package of legislation were two other measures that Senator Helming co-sponsors. One bill (S7531B) would require the parole board to consider all of the testimony provided at a hearing, as current law limits the board to considering only the statements made by the crime victim or a representative for the victim. The measure would also require statements made to the parole board to be kept confidential, as current law keeps confidential only the name and address of a person giving a statement. Another bill (S2819) would mandate that local law enforcement be notified when a person is delinquent in reporting to his or her parole officer so that they could apprehend the parolee to protect the public from being harmed.

All four of these measures passed the Senate with wide bipartisan support and will now be sent to the Assembly for consideration. The package also included a number of measures to strengthen penalties for violent felony offenders and increase protections for judicial personnel and law enforcement officers tasked with overseeing inmates and parolees.