



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senator Seward Announces Funding for Domestic Violence Prevention Programs

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| ISSUE: **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT**



ONEONTA, 07/09/18 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) today joined officials from local domestic violence prevention programs to announce state grants totaling \$45,000 to help support key community services.

The funding awards announced by Senator Seward included:

- Opportunities for Otsego - \$15,000;

- Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego & Schoharie Counties - \$15,000;
- Delaware Opportunities - \$7,500;
- Liberty Resources (Chenango County) - \$7,500.

“These community programs provide vital services for those in dire need, who often have nowhere else to turn,” said Senator Seward. **“We are fortunate to have so many local organizations providing help to vulnerable individuals, and I am pleased to assist them in their efforts to make our communities safer. These agencies are lifelines and, in many cases, are all that stand between a domestic violence victim and further harm.”**

Along with providing grant funds to assist local, non-profit violence intervention programs, Senator Seward is also a proponent of strong laws to help protect women, curb domestic violence, and assist victims.

“Victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment are often dealing with both physical and emotional trauma. Throughout my time as a state senator, I have worked to enact laws to help protect individuals from violence and ensure that victims are not mistreated further and are able to start rebuilding their lives,” Seward added.

This year, the state budget included several provisions to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. Several bills were passed by both the senate and assembly and will be sent to the governor for final approval.

Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Senator Seward and the Senate Majority fought for several measure that were included in the state budget to create safer workplaces free of sexual harassment and abuse:

- Prohibiting secret settlements unless the victim requests confidentiality;
- Prohibiting mandatory arbitration for sexual harassment complaints;
- Protecting non-employees in the workplace;

- Creating a uniform sexual harassment policy and training for businesses as well as state and local governments;
- Requiring all state contractors to submit an affirmation that they have a sexual harassment policy and that they have trained all of their employees; and
- Protecting taxpayer funds from being used for individual sexual harassment judgments.

Preventing “Sextortion”

This year’s state budget included a provision to help prevent sex-related crimes and protect victims from extortion by creating new penalties for the act of sexual coercion – also known as “sextortion.” Anyone threatening a victim’s health, safety, business, career, financial condition, reputation, or personal relationship in exchange for sexual acts will face new felony-level charges.

Helping Survivors of Rape and Sexual Assault

This year’s state budget included funding to support survivors of rape and sexual assault. New requirements ensure that untested rape kits are now stored for 20 years, an enhancement from the current 30-day requirement. This will address serious concerns about the current lack of long-term storage for untested rape kits and will increase the ability of rape and sexual assault survivors to have the time they need to pursue and get justice. In addition, rape survivors will never have to pay any costs, including insurance co-pays, for a rape examination or hospital visit.

Creating a “Sexual Assault Survivor Bill of Rights”

Legislation (S.8977) to better inform sexual assault survivors of their various rights to fair and sensitive treatment during the investigation of their crime passed both houses. The Sexual Assault Survivor Bill of Rights details the right of survivors to consult with and be

accompanied by a victim assistance organization during physical exams and interrogations; the right to preventive treatment for HIV; and the right to get notice about the results of their sexual assault evidence kit and the status of their case.

Additionally, the senate approved several bills that the assembly failed to consider, including measures that would:

- Prohibit sex offenders from driving for Uber and Lyft;
- Prohibit sex offenders from working with children in child care, recreational, entertainment, and other similar settings;
- Protect victims by ensuring that victim and witness statements made to authorities regarding sexual abuse remain private and are not subject to disclosure to the general public through the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL);
- Create a registry of all individuals convicted of a violent felony, also known as Brittany's Law.

“Key measures to increase community awareness and bar predators from vulnerable individuals and locations are needed to strengthen public safety. Going forward, I will continue to advocate for these and other bills to protect innocent victims, provide police and prosecutors with the tools they need to arrest and convict those who commit such heinous acts, and to increase the penalties imposed on the offenders,” Seward concluded.