



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

CSEA and bipartisan group of state legislators push back on plans to shutter Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center

SUSAN SERINO February 22, 2021

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ORANGEBURG – CSEA, the largest union representing state workers on the Rockland Psychiatric Center campus, is teaming up with a bipartisan group of state legislators in pushing back against a proposal that would shutter the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center and move the beds to a facility in the Bronx. This is in addition to the proposed 200 state Office of Mental Health inpatient bed reduction across New York State.

Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center (RCPC) provides inpatient services to a large catchment area, covering Rockland, Westchester, Orange, Sullivan, Putnam, Dutchess and Ulster counties, as well as the greater New York City area. "The only thing that will be accomplished by moving these beds to the Bronx is the creation of greater hardship on Hudson Valley families," said CSEA Southern Region President Anthony Adamo. "Even before the pandemic, mental healthcare resources for children in our community were in need of expansion. That need has only grown over the past year. Rather than move forward with the cruel decision to close RCPC and cut additional OMH beds, we should be expanding services on the RPC campus. The state has a responsibility to care for our most vulnerable New Yorkers; closing RCPC and reducing beds would be abandoning them."

Census numbers at the facility took a dip when the COVID-19 pandemic began, but the facility was back at 100 percent full as of November 2020.

Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther (D-Sullivan and Orange Counties), Chair of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health said, "The proposed closure of Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center couldn't come at a worse time. Children across the state have been dealing with the effects of COVID-19 for a year, and the administration's response is to make mental health services more difficult to obtain. It makes no sense. As a Registered Nurse, I know that the continuity of care means everything to a patient's recovery. We have to do everything we can to fight back against this short-sighted and ill-conceived plan."

Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (D-Rockland and Westchester Counties) said, "Closing the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center would be a terrible decision that would cost jobs and harm some of our most vulnerable children and families. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused incredible stress for New York's children by disrupting their education, and their social and family lives. The state should be investing more into the mental health system, and especially for children - not proposing shutdowns that would force families to send their children to faraway facilities, disrupting their ties to their home and community."

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) said, "Not only would closing the doors at the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center disrupt the lives of the children who are currently treated there and depend on the services, but it would also put a number of hardworking union members out of a stable, good-paying job. If this location is closed, its beds will be shifted to the Bronx, creating a stretch from the Bronx to Utica without any children's inpatient beds. The Governor's proposal to close this location is an absolute lose-lose and I will continue to fight it; there are many other ways to close the state's budget gap that don't make access to services more difficult and that create jobs, not diminish them. I stand by CSEA, its membership, and the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center in fighting

to ensure that this location doesn't go anywhere."

Senator Sue Serino (R-Dutchess and Putnam Counties) said, "Mental healthcare, especially for our young people has never been more important. There is already a significant shortage of beds for young people and this proposal is only going to exacerbate that problem and put lives at risk. On top of that, it's going to take quality jobs away from our Hudson Valley communities at a critical time. Budgets are always about priorities, and we have a duty to ensure that mental healthcare, and the good jobs associated with providing it, are high on the state's list of priorities."

Senator Mike Martucci (R-Hudson Valley) said, "The last thing Hudson Valley families should be forced to face right now is further economic insecurity. Albany's proposal to close Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center—in addition to 200 inpatient beds in the Office of Mental Health system throughout New York state— would not only be a significant loss of good-paying union jobs, but also continue the downtrend of accessible mental health services. At a time when mental health challenges are growing across all ages, it is irresponsible to cut these services and the jobs that support them."

Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski (D-Rockland County) said, "Moving these beds and effectively closing Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center (RCPC) leaves Rocklanders and the Hudson Valley with virtually zero access to essential services right in the middle of a pandemic. The State is already facing a crisis in terms of beds and this further exacerbates a gaping issue in our region and leaves RCPC employees in the dark. For Rockland residents, there are significant transportation issues in getting to the Bronx despite the close mileage between the two. Bottom line: we must reject this proposal from the final budget until further analysis and conversations can be had about the global picture."

Assemblyman Jonathan Jacobson (D-Hudson Valley) said, "Closing the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center will reduce the number of available beds in New York State while increasing the distance Hudson Valley families will need to travel to visit their child. It makes no sense to scale back this or any other mental health services in the midst of a global pandemic and economic collapse."

Assemblyman Colin Schmitt (R-Orange and Rockland Counties) said, "I stand strongly opposed to the proposed closure of the Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center (RCPC) and the proposed closure of hundreds of additional inpatient Office of Mental Health beds across the state. Working in bipartisan fashion with colleagues and community members, I will continue to push back against these terrible executive budget proposals. Now more than ever, it is important to maintain these critical services without reduction, relocation or changes."