

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



**TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY**  
**SENATOR, 58TH DISTRICT**

**RANKING MINORITY MEMBER**  
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND SMALL BUSINESS

AGRICULTURE

**COMMITTEES**

CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME AND CORRECTION

CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS  
AND RECREATION

ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

HIGHER EDUCATION

INSURANCE

TRANSPORTATION

**ALBANY OFFICE:**

ROOM 506  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
(518) 455-2426 OFFICE  
(518) 426-6851 FAX

**DISTRICT OFFICE:**

2239 SOUTH PARK AVENUE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14220  
(716) 826-2683 OFFICE  
(716) 826-2793 FAX

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:**

KENNEDY@NYSENATE.GOV

Hon. Andrew Cuomo  
Governor  
New York State  
The Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I write today to express the importance of funding for the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program in Erie County and across the state. The horrific tragedy our nation witnessed last month in Newtown, CT points to the need for *more* access to mental health services for troubled young people, not less. The budget for the Unified Court System was cut in 2011, and \$1.2 million of these cuts have been passed down to the Office of Court Administration (OCA). OCA then cut funding for CASA by \$800,000, which represents the program's *entire* budget.

It is critical the state funds this program in the next budget year. With Western New York and our entire state on the brink of losing this important program, I propose adding CASA as a line item in the 2013-14 state budget.

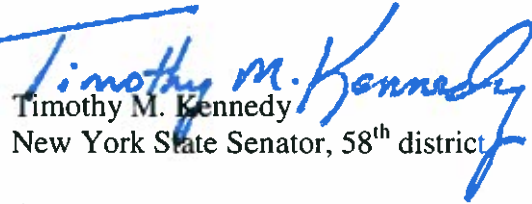
CASA volunteers speak up for the best interests of children in the Family Court System. These children have been removed from their homes because of physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect. As the courts work to place the child in a permanent and stable home, the advocate works to ensure the child's everyday needs are taken into account. CASA volunteers talk to the child about school, friends, family, emotions and what they need on a daily basis.

Advocates work with family members, teachers, counselors, attorneys and judges, and they speak for children whose needs might otherwise be forgotten within the complexities of the court system. CASA volunteers give hope, stability and security to children who have been mistreated and let down by other adults in their lives.

As a state, we must do everything we can to prevent violence and ensure tragic events like the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting never happen again. When children have a voice, a mentor and an adult who cares about them, they are far less likely to commit violent acts against themselves and others. When children have access to mental health care, and when their mental health issues are identified early, they have a chance to receive treatment and lead productive,

healthy and happy lives. For these reasons, I urge you to consider a line item in this year's budget for CASA.

Sincerely,

  
Timothy M. Kennedy  
New York State Senator, 58<sup>th</sup> district

Cc: Assemblyman Sheldon Silver  
Senator Dean Skelos  
Senator Jeff Klein  
Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins