

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE

ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



December 20, 2013

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
New York State
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We commend you for your recent decision to adjust the Office of Mental Health's Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE) Plan and maintain in-patient psychiatric care at St. Lawrence, Binghamton and Elmira. It is imperative that you similarly recognize the vitally important role Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center plays in the lives of children and their families on Long Island. As the only State inpatient beds for children and adolescents on all of Long Island, the safety net that Sagamore provides must be maintained.

Legislative Public Hearings held in Farmingdale, Elmira, Ogdensburg and Middletown on the OMH RCE Plan revealed how detrimental it would be to close certain facilities and force individuals and families to seek care far from home. This is particularly true for children and adolescents whose families are integral to recovery. Nobody wants to see a child in inpatient psychiatric care, but the sad truth is that sometimes it is a necessary step to regaining mental health. Traveling hours across Long Island into Queens or the Bronx to access care and visit their children who are in crisis, would put enormous stress and obstacles in the path of already struggling families.

Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center is already a Regional Center of Excellence for children and adolescents with a long, proven history. As we heard at the Long Island public hearing, "Sagamore has dramatically transformed services for the mentally ill child for the past 30 years in exactly the manner described in the July 2013 manifesto [RCE Plan]." Since the 1980's Sagamore has embraced the importance of community services and was responsible for creating such services. Over the years, the facility has down sized considerably from 150 beds to 54 today, with 15 of those beds eliminated just last year. However, New York State cannot afford to eliminate all state operated beds for children on Long Island and leave it as the sole region of the state without any children's beds.

We encourage you to meet with the children, families and mental health professionals to hear firsthand how important Sagamore is to the care and recovery of so many children and their families on Long Island. A video webcast of the public hearing held in Farmingdale on September 9, 2013, where compelling testimony was heard from countless people on what the

closure of Sagamore would mean to the communities and families, can be accessed at:
<http://www.nysenate.gov/event/2013/sep/09/regional-centers-excellence>

While we commend you, the OMH and the RCE Teams for working to ensure that mental health care in New York State is the best that it can be by expanding much needed community based services, the RCE Plan must be reconfigured to maintain in-patient beds at Sagamore and preserve this safety net. We stand ready and willing to work with you to do whatever is necessary to make this a reality.

Sincerely,



Senator Kemp Hannon
Chair, Senate Health Committee
6th Senatorial District



Senator Dean Skelos
Majority Coalition Leader
9th Senatorial District



Senator David Carlucci
Chair, Senate Mental Health and
Developmental Disabilities Committee



Senator Ken LaValle
1st Senatorial District



Senator John Flanagan
2nd Senatorial District



Senator Lee Zeldin
3rd Senatorial District



Senator Philip M. Boyle
4th Senatorial District



Senator Carl L. Marcellino
5th Senatorial District



Senator Jack Martins
7th Senatorial District



Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr.
8th Senatorial District