

Testimony of Craig E. Speers, NYSPEF Retirees Region 1 WNY President, and Statewide Vice President, before the NYS Legislature's Joint OMH Budget Committee - February 6, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today before the Senators and Assembly members to discuss our concerns regarding the Governor's proposed OMH 2017-18 budget and its impact on WNY.

I represent several thousand PEF retirees, many of whom spent their entire professional working lives dedicated to providing services to mentally ill individuals serviced by NYS OMH.

It is for this reason that we are extremely concerned yet again about a continuing OMH plan contained in this budget to move the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center from its current location in the Town of West Seneca to the grounds of the Buffalo Psychiatric Center located in the City of Buffalo.

This wrongheaded and unsupportable proposal has been foisted on the WNY and CNY on several occasions in recent years. The bottom line has been and continues to be that there is no, and I emphasize no community support or any kind for this proposal - none.

The respective delegations from the NYS Senate and Assembly from Western and Central New York are opposed to this proposal. All community and parent/patient groups and representatives have opposed this proposal. Unions representing the professional employees who provide the outstanding service to the child patients - NYS Public Employees Federation and CSEA are opposed to this proposal. In other words support for maintaining the WNYCPC at its beautiful, bucolic location, so helpful in the treatment of child patients is unanimous.

WNYCPC at its current location is an award treatment facility for child patients up to 18 years of age. It is located on a parcel of land in the Town of West Seneca which is absolutely superior for the treatment of these precious patients. It is very well maintained with its own recreation and treatment facilities and access to walking and nature trails. The therapeutic benefits of this location are well established, and need to be preserved by the legislature. The territory serviced by this fine facility covers 19 counties in Western and Central New York.

Relocating the WNYCPC away from its semi rural environment, and placing this facility on the grounds of BPC, in fact in the same building as the BPC makes no sense whatsoever. BPC provides an essential and excellent service to WNY and CNY in treating severely ill adult patients, some of whom are Level 3 sex offenders. Placing child patients in the same facility as adult patients is really a non starter as a proposal, and needs to be terminated ASAP.

Craig E. Speers, NYSPEF Retirees  
140 Winston Road  
Buffalo, New York 14216