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NY SENATORS, LAW ENFORCEMENT & COMMUNITY LEADERS: PASS THE PROTECT ACT TO RESTORE PUBLIC SAFETY



Syracuse, New York - Senator Pam Helming was joined yesterday by Senator Mark Walczyk, Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon, Onondaga County District Attorney William Fitzpatrick, Onondaga County Sheriff Toby Shelley, Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter, local law enforcement and community leaders from across New York to urge passage of the bipartisan S.2282A PROTECT Act (pretrial risk overview for threat evaluation custody and treatment), introduced by Senator Helming. Developed with input from law enforcement and faith leaders, the legislation gives judges an essential tool to evaluate whether violent offenders should be held pretrial or released.

The PROTECT Act is a bipartisan measure that restores balance to the justice system by requiring judges to apply a clear “dangerousness” standard for individuals charged with a felony or Class A misdemeanor. The bill ensures that communities are protected from dangerous offenders while making clear that no one should be jailed simply because they cannot afford bail.

“This legislation grew out of tragedy — too many people losing their lives and too many people coming up to me telling me they’re afraid in their own neighborhoods. It grew out of store owners forced to shut their doors because they can’t afford to keep absorbing the theft. As elected officials, we have the power and the responsibility to change that. The PROTECT Act is a balanced way to keep dangerous people off our streets and bring New York in line with the 49 other states that already have a ‘dangerousness’ standard. It’s time to put public safety first and pass this bill,” **said Senator Pam Helming.**

“I am proud to support the PROTECT Act, a critical measure designed to enhance public safety across New York. This legislation equips our judges with a vital risk assessment tool to help determine whether defendants should be released or held in custody, focusing on community

safety and addressing the issue of repeat offenders more effectively. Additionally, it recognizes the importance of mental health treatment, ensuring that individuals at risk get the support they need. With skyrocketing crime rates, this act is a necessary step to protect our communities and restore public confidence in our justice system,” **said Senator Mark Walczyk.**

"Public Safety is one of the most important responsibilities we have as elected officials at all levels of government. It is also important that we support our partners in law enforcement by enacting common sense, meaningful criminal justice reforms such as the PROTECT Act. I want to thank Senator Helming for her leadership in this effort and all of our local law enforcement community for the work they do every day to keep us safe,” **said Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon.**

“All New Yorkers should agree that no indigent defendant with a clean or minor record should be held indefinitely because of lack of funds to post bail. However, we should also agree that the Constitution is not a suicide pact. Let’s allow judges to be judges and make reasoned data driven decisions like forty-nine other states do in determining appropriate bail. Thank you, Senator Helming and Senator Walczyk, for your efforts to address this crucial public safety issue,” **said Onondaga District Attorney William Fitzpatrick.**

"This is not about punishing people for being poor. Quite the opposite. The PROTECT Act makes sure that people who aren’t dangerous and who will show up to court don’t sit in jail simply because they can’t afford bail. But it also makes sure that repeat violent offenders and those who threaten public safety can be held until trial,” **said Onondaga County Sheriff Tobias Shelley.**

“The PROTECT Act would establish a dangerousness standard, similar to what exists in every other state and at the federal level; a clear and consistent law that protects both victims and the accused,” **said Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter.**

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