



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## Juvenile Justice Reform Needed at OCFS

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ June 16, 2010

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES**



State Senator George Maziarz and members of a Senate Republican Task Force on Juvenile Justice reform today held a public forum to investigate growing concerns among community members, youth facility staff and law enforcement officials that newly-implemented policies set forth within New York State's juvenile justice system have resulted in escalating violence by juvenile offenders that has put New Yorkers in danger.

Since New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Commissioner Gladys Carrion set forth policy changes there have been numerous reports of violent youths being released prematurely into less secure settings where they have murdered and viciously assaulted community members and attacked OCFS staffers--including the brutal slaying of Renee Greco in Lockport. In December 2009, OCFS also sanctioned a state taxpayer-funded sex party at a youth facility that houses killers and other violent criminals. At least one underage girl and a suspected prostitute were in attendance.

Senator George Maziarz (R,C - Newfane) said, "Renee Greco's young life was cut short in my Senate district. Heinous acts of violence have been committed in other areas of the state. These tragedies

should never have happened, and we owe it to the families and to all New Yorkers to try to fix anything and everything that's wrong at OCFS. The agency's wayward policies have let us all down in a big way and now we need reform.

The public forum entitled, "Policy Failure: Examining the Juvenile Justice System in New York State," featured testimony from security officers and other OCFS staffers from Tryon Residential Center, Lansing Residential Center, Brookwood Secure and Goshen Secure Center all of whom have witnessed or experienced incidents of youth violence within the juvenile justice system. Fulton County District Attorney Louise K. Sira and family and colleagues of New Yorkers who been attacked and murdered by youth in state care also shared their testimony with the Task Force. OCFS Commissioner Carrion and another representative from Governor Paterson's Administration were also invited to testify but declined.

Testimony heard at the public forum will help the Task Force to develop potential solutions to restore accountability within the state's juvenile justice system and make it safer for youth, staff and our communities.

A number of disturbing examples of youth violence at OCFS-licensed or run facilities were discussed at the hearing, including:

- €€€ In June 2009, Youth Counselor Renee Greco, 24, was brutally beaten to death by two teenage residents who had been prematurely released from more secure state facilities. Greco was the sole supervisor of six male residents at a community youth home in Lockport, New York at the time of her murder.
- €€€ In February 2009, 23-year-old Rochester Police Officer Anthony DiPonzio was shot in the head by a juvenile who was AWOL from a private residential community placement facility.
- €€€ In July 2008, Charles Loftly, a worker at the state-operated Tryon Residential Center in Johnstown, New York suffered a stroke and died a month after he was struck in the head with a 2 x 4 by two residents attempting to escape. Months after the incident, several employees sought and obtained orders of protection so they could come to work.

Members of the Task Force include Senator Cathy Young, Senator Joseph Robach, Senator Mike Nozzolio, Senator Hugh Farley, Senator Marty Golden, Senator Bill Larkin, Senator Dale Volker and Senator John Bonacic.

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