



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Lawmakers Call on Governor to Ax Ocfs Commissioner After Further Evidence of Violence in Juvenile Homes

CATHARINE YOUNG March 10, 2011



LINK TO PRESS CONFERENCE THAT SHOWS FOOTAGE OF VIOLENCE IN YOUTH FACILITIES: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYbENeLVUCA>

ALBANY – With shocking new video evidence revealing continued violence in New York’s juvenile centers, state lawmakers are calling on Governor Cuomo to fire Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner (OCFS) Gladys Carrion, according to Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean).

Security video footage, unveiled by former state Commission of Correction’s employee Eileen Carpenter at a recent press conference in Albany, showed graphic images of residents

violently assaulting each other and staff in the state's four juvenile secure centers.

"I commend Ms. Carpenter's courage for coming forward and exposing the truth about the violence that continues under Commissioner Carrion. This video confirms the chaos that has been created by her irresponsible policies," said Senator Young.

"Commissioner Carrion has deliberately and systematically destroyed the juvenile justice system. Staff are being brutally assaulted and other residents are threatened or attacked on almost a daily basis. She has moved these violent offenders into neighborhoods and people like Renee Greco are being murdered. The carnage has to end," she added.

Senator Young said nearly all the incidents on the video presented by Ms. Carpenter were well-planned out and premeditated by the residents who have taken advantage of Commissioner Carrion's permissive system.

The video footage showed nearly a dozen brutal attacks, including a staff member being knocked out in a gym by two residents; a 65-year old female teacher's head being thrown into a desk during a classroom eruption; a resident sent to the hospital after a sucker-punch knocked him out; gang retaliations against other residents and staff; and numerous group assaults and riots that took staff hours to subdue in some cases.

Ms. Carpenter was a Correctional Facility Specialist for the Commission of Corrections and was responsible for investigating the violence within the four secure OCFS facilities through video footage, as well as interviews with staff and residents. She says she was forced out of her job after she continued to press the issue of violence with OCFS officials and other law enforcement agencies, to no avail.

"There always has been an inherent risk in working with this population, but the increase in violence over the past three years can no longer be ignored, covered up or remain unaddressed. The situation warrants immediate and drastic action to prevent the ongoing threats, violence, injuries and the potential loss of life," said Ms. Carpenter.

Senator George D. Maziarz, whose district saw the vicious death of counselor Renee Greco in a group home which housed violent youth offenders in June, 2009, said, "Gladys Carrion does not deserve to hold the position of Commissioner of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Her misguided choice of treatment over incarceration of violent youth offenders continues to put our communities at risk. I believe that Gladys Carrion is the most dangerous person in New York State government and I join Senator Young in asking Governor Cuomo to immediately terminate Commissioner Carrion."

Senator Mike Nozzolio said, “These videos represent the latest evidence of the dangerous environment that staff and residents face every day at these facilities as a result of Commissioner Carrion’s mismanagement and irresponsible policies. Under her direction, the number of violent incidents against staff in the State's OCFS facilities has increased dramatically even as the number of juvenile offenders in these facilities has declined. That is why I am renewing my call for Commissioner Carrion to step down immediately before even more tragedy occurs.”

Senator Betty Little said, “The status quo, not only in light of this video but also the concerns that have been continually raised over the past several years, is not acceptable. The evidence of mismanagement is irrefutable and it calls for swift and decisive action that is in the best interests of the residents of juvenile facilities and the staff.”

Senator Hugh T. Farley said, “I remain very concerned about the safety of the staff at these juvenile facilities. There has been a continued failure of the leadership at the Office of Children and Family Services to work with, support and protect the staff, creating a much more dangerous environment for staff and youth alike.”

Last summer, law enforcement officials, union heads and statewide elected representatives had called for Commissioner Carrion to resign after it was revealed that she had sanctioned social events for youth in detention, including the infamous sex party at the Goshen Secure facility involving an alleged prostitute and a 15 year-old girl.

Senator Young said she also continues to be very concerned with changes in OCFS policies that are forcing violent and untreated residents from more secure facilities into community-based residences where staff are not properly trained to handle the influx of troubled youths.

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.

“Facilities statewide continue to close while residents are getting pushed through the system into community homes that are not prepared to manage these troubled youths.

Innocent people like Renee Greco are losing their lives and communities and staff continue to be put in harm's way," said Senator Young.

Senator Young is introducing legislation that would require proper placement of violent offenders, appropriate staffing in community based residences, more staff training and greater notification to staff and law enforcement of a youth's criminal records.

"You can't dump violent offenders into our neighborhoods without having tragic results. Innocent victims have been murdered, shot and assaulted already because of Commissioner Carrion's terrible policies. She needs to go once and for all," said Senator Young.