



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Lanza & Titone's Bill to Make State Mental Health Facilities Safer Passes Both Houses of Legislature

ANDREW J LANZA May 5, 2011



### **Bill Protects Patients by Preventing Commingling of Adults and Youth**

The New York State Senate passed legislation that will help protect the residents of state-run mental health facilities. The bill (S.3745), sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza and Assemblyman Matthew Titone, requires the creation of rules to prevent commingling of adults and youth to offer additional protection among residents and better address age-specific needs while in the facilities. The bill passed in the Assembly earlier this year.

“We need to protect our vulnerable patients, especially adolescents with disabilities,” said Senator Andrew Lanza. “It is a matter of common sense and decency that adolescent

patients with disabilities not be forced to room with adult patients. This bill seeks to protect patients by ending that practice.”

Assemblyman Matthew Titone said, “I find it reprehensible that present policy would allow children and adolescents who are in psychiatric emergency to be hospitalized next to adults who are also in psychiatric emergency. I am proud to have authored this legislation which will correct this dangerous and counterproductive practice and will foster better mental health recovery by protecting especially vulnerable children.”

Dr. Kenneth Popler, President and CEO of the Staten Island Mental Health Society said, “After reviewing the legislation, it seems to be an effort to protect the safety and welfare of children and adolescents receiving care within New York State’s operated or certified mental health facilities. The legislation is designed to protect children. We strongly support this initiative as it is proposed, and we commend Senator Lanza and Assemblyman Titone for their leadership.”

“This bill will further ensure that the residents of our state’s mental health facilities get the quality care they need and deserve,” Senator Andrew Lanza said. “By requiring age-appropriate separation of patients, we are preventing potential issues from arising between younger and older patients, and continuing to focus on their health and well-being.”

Assemblyman Matthew Titone said, “I applaud Senator Lanza for shepherding our legislation through the Senate and hope that the governor will sign it in to law immediately.”

The bill requires the Commissioner of the state Office of Mental Health to create rules and regulations requiring age-appropriate separation of patients in residential facilities operated by the state and programs subject to operating certificates. The rules would address age-specific concerns and needs of patients including procedures for age and program separation. Additionally, the rules will address preventive and remedial actions, including incident reporting to prevent abuse or maltreatment, and security requirements to ensure the health and safety of children, adolescent and adult patients.

Lanza & Titone have penned a letter to Governor Cuomo urging him to sign the legislation into law forthwith.

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