



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Renews Call for Strengthening Kendra's Law in Wake of Latest Subway Tragedy in New York City

CATHARINE YOUNG December 5, 2012

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH**

A similar murder in 1999 was the catalyst for the original bill

ALBANY – Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean) is again calling for strengthening Kendra’s Law, a law that was put in place to help people with mental illness receive outpatient treatment, after a deranged man killed a Queens resident by pushing him in front of an oncoming subway near Times Square. Ki Suk Han, 58, died on Monday.

“Based on reports from the media and witnesses, it appears that the attacker had been yelling and cursing at passersby on the subway platform,” said Senator Young. “We need to expand and strengthen the laws and procedures that determine how and when people receive treatment for mental illness. We cannot afford to wait any longer.”

In an eerily similar incident in 1999, Kendra Webdale, a 32-year-old woman, was pushed in front of a subway train by a man with untreated schizophrenia who was roaming New York City streets. “Kendra’s Law” was enacted in response to this tragedy. It put in place “Assisted Outpatient Treatment” (AOT) in New York, which allows courts to order severely mentally ill outpatients to comply with treatment, while directing counties to provide such treatment and monitor compliance.

However, deficiencies in the current law have been identified. Senator Young has been strongly advocating for eliminating the loopholes that continue to enable tragedies to occur, like the untimely death of Mr. Han this week. Just this past April, a New York City police officer was attacked by a man who had bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, after he tried to take the man to a hospital to receive some treatment. Officer Eder Loor was stabbed in the head by Terrence Hale, who had a history of arrests and mental illness.

“It is time for New York to do the right thing and stop these senseless acts of violence that could be prevented by improving Kendra’s Law,” added Young. “By strengthening the law, we can improve care, save money and increase safety. We need to be more proactive in getting people the help that they so desperately need and I call on the Assembly to support this important bill.”

In 2010, the law was merely extended for five more years, without strengthening or expanding its scope. Senator Young’s bill that is pending before the Legislature addresses cracks in the AOT system such as: tracking of mentally ill patients upon discharge from hospitals and the correctional system and when they relocate to other counties; more frequent evaluations; and taking into account a family members’ testimony when courts make treatment decisions.