



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Statement on St. Lawrence Psych Center Plan

PATTY RITCHIE July 10, 2013

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The no-layoff plan unveiled by the Office of Mental Health assures a continued role for the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in the delivery of mental health services to the North County community, and protects hundreds of jobs that are vital to the economy of this region. That much is known.

But there are a great many details of how this three-year plan will affect the Psych Center and the surrounding community that remain to be discovered. It's unclear exactly what the three-year transition to a "community service hub" will mean for the facility, its workforce of more than 550 professionals, or the hundreds of vendors, small businesses and area residents who rely on the Psych Center to support their livelihood or the provision of health care services.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE OMH RESTRUCTURING PLAN](#)

I will continue to study the OMH plan, and engage members of the mental health care community, as well as civic and business leaders, to more fully measure the actual impact of this plan on Ogdensburg, St. Lawrence County and the entire region.

St. Lawrence Psych Center has been an integral part of this community for more than 150 years, and it will continue to be so, even with restructuring.

OMH says that, in preparing this plan, it relied on “over 2,000 public comments” that it collected in listening sessions that it conducted across the state. That many were collected in Ogdensburg alone, through a [special online petition I created](#), and a standing room-only crowd at the May 15 session held at the facility’s Unity Center.

In addition, members of this community [sent more than 15,000 postcards](#) to the Governor and OMH Commissioner to show their support for the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center.

There is no doubt in my mind that the OMH plan for the St. Lawrence Psych Center would look far different—and possibly much worse—but for the strong outpouring of support from this community.

I wish to thank everyone who rose up to fight for the Psych Center, as well as Acting Commissioner Woodlock, for listening to our concerns. I expect that she and the Office of Mental Health will continue to take into account the needs and wishes of this community as they move to implement this or any restructuring plan.