



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara's online petition to save Elmira PC drawing hundreds of supporters (Updated, July 22)

THOMAS F. O'MARA July 19, 2013

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH**



**Elmira, N.Y., July 19**—An online “Join The Fight!” petition drive launched on Tuesday by State Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C-Big Flats) to rally public support for the continued operation of the Elmira Psychiatric Center (Elmira PC) has already drawn more than 750 supporters.

“The response has grown day by day, and it’s been very positive,” said O’Mara, who continued to urge supporters to spread the word about the petition drive. “It’s going to be very helpful to the overall effort to encourage Governor Cuomo and his administration to reconsider the future of the Elmira PC.”

O'Mara's [online petition](#) comes after last week's announcement by the state Office of Mental Health (OMH) of a comprehensive, statewide reorganization plan that will shut down inpatient services at the Elmira PC and psychiatric hospitals in eight other communities throughout New York, mostly upstate. The hospitals will be closed and existing services consolidated within 15 "regional centers of excellence" OMH plans to open across the state.

Under the plan, Elmira PC, Buffalo PC and Western New York Children's PC will be merged into one regional center known as the Great Lakes RCE that will be located in Buffalo. The plans calls for no inpatient services to remain at Elmira, but the center will continue as a "community hub" of the Great Lakes RCE and provide highly specialized community services.

O'Mara [has been critical](#) of the OMH plan for failing to recognize the central role that the Elmira PC has played in the delivery of an inpatient and outpatient network of mental health services over an 11-county region across the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes and western New York. He continues to stress that the Elmira PC has been one of New York's most cost effective, efficient, innovative and high quality mental health providers for decades and that the Cuomo administration plan fails to fully recognize the challenges of providing these services in the rural communities and regions where the Elmira PC has been successful.

The OMH plan would force area patients and their families to travel to Buffalo, Rochester or Utica for inpatient care. O'Mara said that risks unacceptable hardships for patients and families who would have to travel great distances and, in fact, may make some of them reluctant to seek out the care and treatment they need.

"We're not about to give up the fight to somehow find a way to ensure that the Elmira PC's tradition of care, prevention and treatment for patients and families throughout our rural communities is carried on," said O'Mara. "There simply isn't a network of community-based organizations across this region to take the place of the Elmira PC."

To sign O'Mara's "Join The Fight!" petition, [CLICK HERE](#).

You can also stay updated on the overall effort through the following website:  
[www.supportepc.org](http://www.supportepc.org).

[July 22, 2013 Update: Support for the petition continues to grow and has now reached 921]