



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Cuomo administration changes course on Elmira Psychiatric Center; O'Mara praises community effort to help save local jobs, services (UPDATED, December 20):

THOMAS F. O'MARA December 19, 2013

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Elmira, N.Y., December 19— State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) released the following statement on today's **Cuomo administration announcement** on the future of the Elmira Psychiatric Center:

"It's very positive, timely and welcome news to begin the new year. From a fiscal and quality-of-service standpoint, we've clearly made a convincing case for a stronger role for Elmira and Binghamton in this state's mental health system. The Cuomo administration listened and, to a significant extent, will reverse course for the foreseeable future. We certainly appreciate Governor Cuomo's willingness to begin responding to our strong belief that the Elmira Psychiatric Center deserves to remain a cornerstone of regional mental health care, including inpatient care."

“Above all, it’s a testament to the outpouring of grassroots support and action that’s been underway locally since July. Everyone who took the time to sign a petition or join us at a rally made a difference. All of the hard work put in by local government, business and community leaders, the staff and employees of the Elmira Psychiatric Center, patients and families, and countless concerned citizens is making a difference.

“So the hard work has paid off, but we’re always going to have to stay diligent in keeping Governor Cuomo aware that the Elmira Psychiatric Center is an irreplaceable lifeline for cost-effective, high-quality mental health care across the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes and western New York. We will always face a challenge to permanently save this facility, protect these critical local jobs for the long term, and fully secure the vital services that only the Elmira Psychiatric Center can provide.”

At a regional state Office of Mental Health (OMH) meeting in Binghamton this afternoon, which included a video conference appearance by Cuomo, the governor announced that the state’s modifying an earlier decision to eliminate inpatient services at Elmira and, instead, will continue to provide 48 adult beds and 18 children beds at the facility. Elmira will also receive 48 new community residential beds and serve as the hub for additional services. The Greater Binghamton Health Center will also continue adult and children inpatient services and will be designated a “Children’s Behavioral Health Center of Excellence for the Southern Tier”-- all of which, O’Mara said, “guarantees a stronger role for the Southern Tier in the state’s system of mental health care.

[UPDATED, Dec. 20: For more, see [WETM-TV](#), [Star-Gazette](#), [The Leader](#), [WENY-TV](#)]

Read Governor Cuomo's announcement [HERE](#).

Since the initial announcement in early July that the Cuomo administration planned to eliminate inpatient services at and diminish the overall role of the Elmira Psychiatric Center next year as part of a statewide Office of Mental Health (OMH) restructuring plan, O’Mara has joined other local government, business and community leaders to protest the move as devastating to the quality of regional mental health care, and to the local economy. The efforts have included support rallies and public hearings, including a November 23rd rally at the Clemens Center in Elmira that drew hundreds of supporters. O’Mara has also been running an online “Join the Fight! To Save the Elmira Psychiatric Center” petition on his Senate website that, together with an accompanying paper petition drive, has drawn more than 6,000 supporters.

In late November, O’Mara, State Senate Deputy Majority Leader Tom Libous of Binghamton, area Assemblymen Chris Friend and Phil Palmesano, and a group of other state legislators whose districts would also be impacted by the OMH reorganization plan met with top Cuomo administration officials in Albany to discuss the future of mental health care in the Southern Tier.

O'Mara emerged from that meeting hopeful that the Cuomo administration was willing to move toward some of the OMH changes unveiled today.

Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R-C, Corning) and Assemblyman Chris Friend (R-Big Flats) released the following statement in reaction to today's news:

"It's a fantastic development for mental health patients and families throughout the 11-county region that the Elmira Psychiatric Center serves, and it couldn't have been delivered at a better time. We've appreciated the opportunity to be part of such a coordinated, collective, impressive effort across the region to help save these critical community services and local jobs."