



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk: OMH Shortchanges Community Mental Health Reinvestment

CECILIA TKACZYK February 13, 2014

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State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk today disputed claims by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) about the savings to be generated from the planned downsizing of the State's psychiatric hospital system. By underestimating those savings, the agency is shortchanging the "Community Mental Health Reinvestment Program" by millions of dollars.

The Executive Budget proposes closing 399 beds and OMH estimates annual savings per bed to be \$110,000 -- a total savings of about \$43 million annually.

However, holding a billing statement from the state Office of Mental Health (OMH) Senator Tkaczyk noted that the daily rate for an inpatient bed in a state psychiatric hospital is more than \$1,100, yielding annual savings of \$408,000 per bed.

This would mean that the 399 planned bed closures will generate more than **\$163 million** in annualized savings. The OMH proposed budget, however, would only reinvest \$25 million into community-based mental health services. Senator Tkaczyk said that amount should be much higher, to reflect the actual savings generated by the closures.

“Even if you factor in additional costs, such as facility maintenance and operations, there is a huge difference in the amount of money actually being saved with the closure of these beds and facilities and what is represented in OMH’s proposed budget,” Senator Tkaczyk said during budget hearings today.

“Although we disagree on the exact amount saved by the closures, it is clear that OMH’s budget proposal shortchanges Community Reinvestment by millions of dollars,” she said.

The Executive Budget appropriates \$25 million into community-based mental health services. Senator Tkaczyk has sent a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo requesting that budget allocation be increased in his 30-day amendments to reflect that actual savings from the bed closures.

The Senator is a vocal supporter of the “Community Mental Health Reinvestment Program,” which reinvests money from the downsizing and closing of state operated psychiatric hospitals into community-based services. Although first enacted in 1993, the twenty year-old law has been shortchanged in the budget far more often than it has been fully funded.

Senator Tkaczyk said, “Twenty years ago, the State made a promise to fund community-based mental health services as we closed and consolidated institutional settings. Community-based programs are less expensive and more effective, but they have been consistently underfunded by billions of dollars since 1993.”