



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Otsego County Mental Health Concerns Under The Microscope

JAMES L. SEWARD April 17, 2014

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ONEONTA, 04/17/14 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today commented on a meeting he convened of local stakeholders to discuss the future of emergency psychiatric services in Otsego County and the surrounding region:

“The decision by Bassett Medical center to terminate inpatient psychiatric services has wide-ranging consequences. Today’s meeting of local stakeholders included a brief summary of what led to the decision, and more importantly, allowed for an open dialogue on actions to be taken to fill the pending treatment void.

“Mental health needs are diverse, complex, highly specialized, and can often result in a crisis situation. Proper treatment can be the difference between life and death. We need to ensure that appropriate resources are available and that those in need are able to access suitable, timely care.

“Already, several modifications are well underway, including the activation of a Mobile Crisis Assessment Team, which will help meet emergency mental health needs. The MCAT and other health leaders will also be reeducating the public on how to access appropriate services and will be expanding their reach through several counties.

“Further, the transportation of patients in need of acute care must be fine-tuned. Transitioning away from police transfers for patients that are not dangerous to ambulance and other transportation means will be a high priority in order to maximize public safety, reduce pressure on public resources, and ensure appropriate means of care.

“As we revise the service model in Otsego County, and the surrounding region, it is imperative that we maximize our resources and evolve to deliver services through new channels. I am committed to

securing any available state dollars to help implement this transformation and, I believe our health care professionals, college leaders, and municipal officials, working cooperatively, are up to the challenge ahead.”

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A complete list of meeting participants:

Senator James L. Seward

John V. Tauriello, Deputy Commissioner & Counsel, NYS Office of Mental Health

Linda Nelson, NYS Office of Mental Health

David Wollner, Legislative Coordinator, NYS Office of Mental Health

Susan Matt, Director of Community Services, Otsego County

Marion Mossman, Chairperson, Community Services Board, Otsego County

Dr. William Streck, President & CEO, Bassett Healthcare

Karen Huxtable-Hooker, Director of Public & Media Relations, Bassett Healthcare

Dr. Celeste Johns, Chief of Psychiatry, Bassett Healthcare

Mayor Richard Miller, City of Oneonta

Chief Dennis Naylor, Oneonta Police Department

Lieutenant Doug Brenner, Oneonta Police Department

Chief Pat Pidgeon, Oneonta Fire Department

Sergeant Ray Freer, Otsego County Sheriff's Office

Dr. Steve Perry, VP of Student Development, SUNY Oneonta

Dr. Margaret Drugovich, President, Hartwick College

Gary Robinson, Director of Counseling Services, Hartwick College

Rina Reba, Otsego and Delaware chapters of NAMI

Kathy Clark, Chair, Board of Representatives, Otsego County

Donald Lindberg, Board of Representatives, Otsego County, Chair of Health & Education Committee