

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:

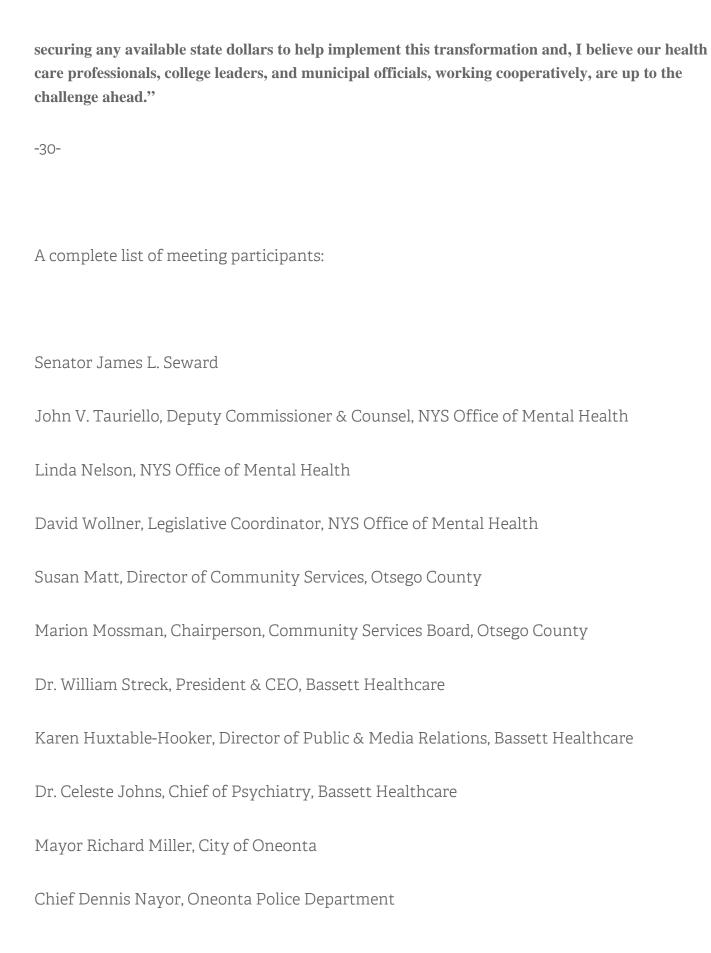
"The decision by Bassett Medical center to terminate inpatient psychiatric services has wide-ranging consequences. Today's meeting of local stakeholders included a brief summary of what led to the decision, and more importantly, allowed for an open dialogue on actions to be taken to fill the pending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



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