



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Security Concerns at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center Prove Worst Fears

TONY AVELLA June 5, 2014



*Second patient with criminal history easily escapes hospital in less than six months*

(Queens, NY) **Today**, Senator Avella was joined by Civic leaders and nearby residents at a press conference demanding answers as yet another patient with a criminal history easily escaped Creedmoor Psychiatric Center located in Queens Village.

Senator Avella learned that a patient escaped around 2 PM on Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> from a secure outside recreation area that was surrounded by a “double curved” fence enclosure which should have made an escape extremely difficult. The patient, Clifford Brown, was previously transferred to Creedmoor for a psychiatric evaluation pending his release from

custody. He recently served time in an upstate secure psychiatric facility in relation to marijuana possession and a parole violation from a prior conviction. The patient was later picked up by Police officers from the 101<sup>st</sup> Precinct and brought to the 105<sup>th</sup> Precinct for processing.

This marks the second incident of an escaped patient in a six month time frame, raising significant security concerns within Creedmoor.

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a patient with a criminal history quietly walked out of the Psychiatric Center with shocking ease after switching clothes with a visitor. Hours passed before local residents learned of the news from media outlets.

Immediately following this initial unfortunate incident, Senator Tony Avella requested a prompt investigation by the Office of Mental Health of events which led up to the escape. In March, Senator Avella learned that, as a direct result of this inquiry, the State had agreed to launch a full investigation and analysis of current security policies not just at Creedmoor but all other Psychiatric Centers throughout New York.

Senator Avella stated, “This is deeply troubling to hear that someone has escaped Creedmoor Psychiatric Center for the second time in less than 6 months. At this point, it is apparent that current security procedures at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center are in dire need of reform and the sense of security for the surrounding residents has been deeply shaken. I call on the State, which has already launched an investigation following the first incident at my request, to expand their investigation of all security procedures at Creedmoor and implement all necessary changes as soon as possible.”

Mr. Richard Hellenbrecht of the Queens Civic Congress, “I am a resident of Bellerose and I live about a mile away from Creedmoor. This is very scary to the civic associations and the residents and the people who live nearby who are within walking distance of this location. We, at the time of the first incident, got together and prepared a seven point action plan and very strongly came out against the security issues going on at the hospital. We now demand that some additional security measures be put in place immediately to prevent this incident from occurring again in the future. These types of situations have to be controlled. We demand better. This hospital has been in the area for 40 years. They should by now have figured out ways to keep the patients on the premises and properly secured.”

Mr. Brian Murphy, First Vice President of the Creedmoor Civic Association stated, “I echo the statements made by Mr. Hellenbrecht. Also, the biggest asset in our community is our

children. We have schools nearby, a beautiful Little League complex right across the street from Creedmoor, YMCA, Alley Pond Park – all within walking distance from Creedmoor and as an area resident of over 40 years, I am extremely concerned with patients roaming the area. While I emphasize with their medical problems, there has to be much tighter security and some sort of accountability for their wanderings and ware bouts. We support Senator Avella on any efforts he makes. Something must be done to better the security on-site.”

Ms. Lourdes Hatrick, President of the Bellerose Commonwealth Civic Association, “I firmly believe that the hospital needs to have better security. We have many residents in the area and it needs to be better secured. It is unacceptable that, in less than a year, they’ve had two escapees. There has to be better supervision, better training for security personnel and our families should have a sense of safety.”

Mr. Michael P. Castellano, President of the Lost Community Civic Association, added in a statement, “I represent a community that is located very close to the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center and was very concerned when I received notification from both the 105th Police Precinct and Senator Avella's office that another patient with a criminal history had easily escaped... by simply climbing over a fence! Where is the security? How can this be allowed happen? Why should I along with my neighbors have to be concerned that something like this can occur, placing all of us in danger. I support Senator Avella and my fellow civic leaders demanding that a full investigation be made at once and we be informed as to what measures are being taken NOW to prevent this from happening again. I expect a full report be made immediately and this type of occurrence not be something we will be hearing about again. Security at the facility must be tightened NOW so I, along with my neighbors can be sure that we are safe in our community.”

Photo #1: Mr. Richard Hellenbrecht, Senator Avella, Mr. Brian Murphy

Photo #2: Mr. Hellenbrecht, Ms. Lourdes Hatrick, Sen. Avella, Mr. Murphy

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