



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Announces New Law to Increase Mandated Child Abuse Reporters Working in Schools

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 6, 2014

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*Governor Signed Bill that Senator Kennedy Cosponsored to Expand and Clarify the Ranks of Mandated Reporters Looking out for Children in School and after School.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, today announced a new law that will increase the ranks of mandated reporters working in schools across the state. The legislation, which Senator Kennedy cosponsored, will expand and clarify the school officials required to report suspected child abuse by designating school coaches as mandated reporters. Governor

Andrew Cuomo signed this bill into law today.

Under current law, many school officials are specifically designated as mandated reporters, which means they must inform child-protection authorities when they suspect a child is being abused or neglected. With this new law, (S.4751), school coaches, school athletic directors and other personnel who work with children in school sports will be added to the defined list of designated mandated reporters. By making these individuals mandated reporters, the state will ensure more people are looking out for children and relaying suspected abuse to the proper authorities.

“This important new law will expand the ranks of mandated abuse reporters working in our schools,” said Senator Tim Kennedy. “Coaches often become a person of trust for children, and youth may turn to their coaches to confide in them. Children may share problems they’re experiencing at home, at school or elsewhere. Understanding this, it is vital for the state to clarify the duties of coaches and school athletics personnel to report suspected child abuse and neglect. This is an important step in the right direction with our ongoing efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect across our state.”

In outlining the need for stronger laws against child abuse, Kennedy pointed to several jarring statistics. Across the country, about 700,000 children become victims of abuse or neglect each year. In New York State alone, about 80,000 children are abused or neglected every year. In 2011, an estimated 1,570 children died from abuse and neglect nationwide.

“One child abused is enough to spark outrage, but thousands and thousands of children – that is absolutely unacceptable and utterly appalling,” Kennedy said. “New York State needs strong laws to stop child abuse, and we must continue forward with our work to end abuse and neglect.”

Senator Kennedy has been fighting for comprehensive reform to improve Child Protective Services in Western New York and across the state. In addition to this mandated-reporter expansion, two major reforms that Senator Kennedy has pushed in Albany were approved by the Legislature this year. They are now awaiting the Governor's signature to become law.

Of these approved bills, one is Senator Kennedy's legislation that will significantly **improve the statewide child abuse hotline by requiring the state to track repeated reports of abuse and neglect**. This bill requires the state Office of Children and Family Services to examine the previous call history of children named in suspected abuse reports and to transmit all prior records to the local Child Protective Services agency that investigates new allegations. This reform will ensure a more appropriate and thorough response from local CPS offices, and it will provide for more seamless communication between the state hotline and the local offices investigating.

Senator Kennedy also helped usher through the State Senate important **CPS legislation that will require local Departments of Social Services to regularly and fully disclose workers' caseload numbers** and to devise strategies to lower caseloads to the state-recommended level of 15 cases. This will prove especially vital to improving CPS locally, as some Erie County CPS workers have caseloads of about 50 – far exceeding state recommendations.

“In Western New York, tragedy has prompted action. Far too many children here have died, and far too many have suffered severe abuse and neglect. It needs to stop,” Kennedy said. “We must continue to do all we can to keep children safe from harm and prevent abuse and neglect.”

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, you should immediately call the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment at 1-800-342-3720. If you suspect a child is in immediate danger, you should call 911.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*