



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Says Re-Opened Spa Castle Can't Be Trusted to Self-Monitor the Safety of its Facilities

ANDREI VASILESCU May 4, 2016



Queens, NY – Today, State Senator Tony Avella praised the Department of Health (DOH) for having Spa Castle revise its safety protocols before allowing it to reopen, but said that Spa Castle should not be trusted to self-police the safety of its own facilities. Avella called for the City to create a task force to assess and monitor the safety of Spa Castle and similar establishments, a suggestion he originally made in 2014 after a separate incident where a Spa Castle patron was found dead in one of their hot tubs. Although the administration did not follow his recommendation, the Senator says that, after now two incidents, the City must

act.

On February 19th, 2016, a seven year old girl nearly drowned in Spa Castle's pool after being pulled into the spa's suction. Investigators found that the pools had excessive suctioning and that the resuscitation efforts of Spa Castle staff were not consistent with what investigators were told. After DOH's inspection of the facility and its security footage, the College Point Spa Castle was ordered to close by DOH on February 29th, 2016.

To reopen, Spa castle had to meet several pre-opening conditions established by DOH, including the submission of a revised safety plan, correction of all violations, proof of certification and training of staff in the new safety plan, demonstration of sufficient staffing levels, the passage of a full inspection, and the adherence to all Health Code engineering requirements.

However, Senator Avella warned that Spa Castle has already proven to be unreliable and should not be trusted to adhere to the safety protocols, suggesting that more oversight is needed so as to prevent future incidents from occurring.

"Spa Castle has very clearly shown, time and again, that safety is a secondary concern for the establishment. The near-drowning of a seven-year old girl is not an isolated incident; Spa Castle has been at the center of several controversies. I commend DOH for having Spa Castle overhaul its safety protocol before allowing it to reopen, but we should not and cannot expect that Spa Castle will suddenly self-police itself in the absence of oversight. I called on the City to create a taskforce to inspect Spa Castle and similar facilities after a man was found dead from a heart attack in one of their pools, raising questions about how long he had been submerged before the staff even noticed. The City did nothing then and it would be absolutely unconscionable if it didn't do something now," said State Senator Tony Avella.