



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Stands Against Sex Offender Placement in Family Homeless Shelters

ANDREI VASILESCU June 29, 2016



**Queens, NY** - Today, State Senator Tony Avella stood with neighborhood advocacy group Elmhurst United to protest the placement of Level 2 and 3 sex offenders in family homeless shelters and called on the City to find alternative housing for them.

It was recently revealed that two dangerous, high-level sex offenders had registered as residing in the former Pan American Hotel family homeless shelter. The City had previously pledged to protect homeless families and children by refusing to house Level 3 sex offenders

in the same shelters.

Homeless families are already some of the city's most beleaguered and forcing them to share living facilities with registered sex offenders sends a message to these families that their safety is of little concern.

Despite these promises, within the past month, two Level 3 sex offenders, one with three underage victims and the other a convicted rapist, were found living in the Pan Am shelter. Although both sex offenders listed the Pan Am shelter as their current place of residence on the state sex offender registry, the City earlier this month claimed that no one on the registry currently resided there. However, shelter residents confirm that they have seen the sex offenders as recently as last weekend.

"The City has failed to implement the very procedures they've acknowledged are necessary to protect homeless families, and have allowed Level 3 sex offenders to occupy the same shelters shared by children. Either DHS was disingenuous with their statement that Level 3 sex offenders were not in the Pan Am shelter, or they were outright unaware. Either scenario is deeply concerning. You can be sympathetic to keeping a sex offender's family together, but do so while finding a solution that doesn't also endanger countless other families," **said State Senator Tony Avella.**

Over the course of an investigation launched by the State Senate's Independent Democratic Conference, it was revealed that 11 sex offenders had previously been placed in family homeless shelters. Senators Avella and Jeff Klein argue that, in terms of logistics, the City could easily find alternative locations.

"Sex offenders should have no place in family homeless shelters, where many of our city's most vulnerable children reside. Despite the current administration stating that they will no longer house Level 3 sex offenders in family shelters, two Level 3 offenders are currently

living at the Pan Am shelter in Queens. Situations like this are why I introduced and passed legislation that would prohibit sex offenders from residing in shelters that also house families or children. When it comes to homeless families, we must make protecting innocent children our priority and remove these offenders," **said State Senator Jeffrey D. Klein.**

Senator Klein has introduced legislation that would prohibit the placement of Level 2 and 3 sex offenders in family homeless shelters. The legislation (S.6851), which Senator Avella co-sponsors, passed the Senate 55-0 this session, but did not move through the Assembly.

"DHS has the moral obligation to ensure that residents, particularly children, are safe from these violent perpetrators. At a minimum, DHS should have alerted the affected parties prior to the placement of these two sex offenders. Their lack of action is absolutely disgraceful. It is imperative that DHS puts procedures in place to direct these high risk individuals to a facility away from vulnerable populations and schools. This must be done in the most expeditious manner possible," **said Sally Wang, a representative of the advocacy group Elmhurst United.**

"The City must prioritize protecting homeless families and immediately relocate sex offenders from family shelters to more appropriate accommodations. If they do not, the state legislature will need to step in and pass Senator Klein's legislation," **concluded Senator Avella.**