



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt Commends Advocates for Peace Officer Bill

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Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) today thanked a pair of advocates pushing for change that would make communities safer and help to save lives. Senator Ortt worked with the Orange County Health Department to craft legislation that would designate licensed physicians and first responders employed by a municipal police department or sheriff's office as armed peace officers.

Recruited doctors, paramedics and EMTs would act as special police officers during active shooter situations, or imminent threats of violence and help to efficiently respond to an

emergency. The trained medical professional would treat those with serious injuries on site, and as a designated peace officer, would be allowed to carry a firearm as they secure the area, neutralize the threat and provide care.

Senator Ortt introduced the bill (S.6643) earlier this year with Assemblyman Robert J. Rodriguez. The bill however, was held up in committee during this past legislative session.

Senator Ortt said, “A few police departments, including North Tonawanda, already employ physicians on their SWAT teams in the event someone is seriously harmed, but those physicians cannot enter a hot zone or warm zone with the team to provide immediate assistance. This bill would change that, and allow licensed medical professionals to protect themselves as they put their lives on the line to save others. It would ensure vital safeguards are in place and could mean the difference between life and death for our officers, medical professionals, and innocent bystanders. I want to thank Dr. Eli Avila and Mr. Estrada for their commitment to seeing this legislation through.”

Assemblyman Rodriguez, District 68 East Harlem/El Barrio, Central Harlem and the Upper Eastside, said, “Arming trained and certified medical professionals while they are deployed during active shooter situations will provide increased safety to innocent bystanders, police officers, and the physicians. This is only common sense, when the physicians are in the field they cannot effectively save lives while they are simultaneously facing a threat on their own lives without means to protect themselves.”

Orange County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Eli Avila said, “Tragically, active shootings have become increasingly common in our American society. Current studies based on active shootings show that in states where trained medical professionals are designated peace officers, armed and integrated into responding law enforcement teams that enter Warm/Hot Zones, victim and law enforcement survival rates are significantly increased.

Senator Ortt's bill astutely addresses New York State's current preparedness void with the addition of Tactical Emergency Medical Support personnel to the New York Criminal Procedure Law, which designates who may be a "Peace Officer." This proposed law will allow Police Chiefs and Sheriffs throughout all of New York State to recruit and train designated medical personnel, such as Physicians, Paramedics, and EMTs as part of their local SWAT teams and to minimize loss of life during these disasters."

Director of Health Equity for the Orange County Dept. of Health Ruben Estrada said, "This bill is long overdue. Senator Ortt and Assemblyman Rodriguez recognize the importance of this bill, and I'm hopeful the rest of the state legislators will recognize that too and pass it. Ultimately, this bill will help protect children, families and communities and most importantly, it will save lives."

Professions that currently have peace officer status include court officers, parole officers, probation officers, special deputy sheriffs, special patrolman, court officers in various counties and others.

To become a peace officer, licensed physicians would have to be selected and employed by a police chief or sheriff, and complete training programs similar to those of other law enforcement officers. They would then be deputized as a SWAT team officer, and deployed with their local law enforcement agency during potentially dangerous and violent situations. Currently, trained medical professionals employed by a law enforcement agency are not authorized to enter a "hot zone" or "warm zone" to treat victims. Having a peace officer classification would change that.

According to Dr. Avila, in states, such as Texas, where trained medical professionals are armed and allowed to move with teams in "hot zones," the survival rate is significantly increased. An incident, for example, where the outcome could have been different for one

victim is the Columbine school shooting in 1999. A report from the Colorado Governor's Columbine Review Commission showed that the most tragic example of the problems for EMTs was their inability to bring medical assistance quickly to a teacher who had been seriously wounded by shotgun blast. As a result, the teacher bled to death. The Commission Review concluded that SWAT teams should include one or more members with emergency medical training to minimize the time interval between a SWAT team's arrival and primary treatment of injured victims.

The peace officer bill will be reintroduced once legislative session resumes in January.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2015-S6643

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to designating physicians employed by a municipal police department, while deployed with the special weapons and tactics team, as peace officers

February 02, 2016

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

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Do you support this bill?