



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## State Legislators Call for a Meeting With Governor Cuomo on Future of WNY Children's Psychiatric Center

JIM RANNEY January 13, 2017

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Senator Patrick M. Gullivan (R-C-I, Elma), Assemblymember Michael Kearns (D, West Seneca), Senator Robert Ortt (R-C-I, North Tonawanda) and Senator Chris Jacobs (R-C-I, Buffalo) are once again calling on Governor Cuomo and the Office of Mental Health to keep the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center at its current location in West Seneca. The legislators are requesting a meeting with the governor to discuss efforts by the State Office of Mental Health to close the facility and transfer adolescent patients to the Buffalo

Psychiatric Center.

Members of the State Legislature delegation also announced a letter (attached) signed by a bi-partisan group of Senators and Assemblymembers from Western and Central New York will be sent to the governor urging him to keep the West Seneca Children's Psychiatric Center open. WNYCPC was opened in 1970 and serves patients from 19 New York counties.

"I have yet to hear a compelling argument that closing the West Seneca facility and moving children and adolescents to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center will improve treatment or outcomes," Gallivan said. "While this move may in fact save the state some money, the families of patients, mental health experts and others believe it will jeopardize the health and wellbeing of those currently cared for at the West Seneca location. Moving vulnerable children into the same facility as adults, including sexual predators, simply makes no sense and is not fair to them or their families."

"The WNY Children's Psychiatric Center excels and exceeds all other similar institutions in New York State," Kearns said. "It makes no sense for the Governor to spend \$11.5 million to fix something that isn't broken. My office has received an outpouring of support from the community to keep the WNYCPC open in West Seneca."

"The unilateral process has been disappointing for the WNY State Legislature Delegation, advocates, and most of all, the families of patients at the Children's Psychiatric Center," said Ortt, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. "Despite public outcry and dozens of attempts to keep the consolidation of the facilities from moving forward, the governor and OMH continuously choose to ignore us and turn their backs on these vulnerable children. That is simply not acceptable. We refuse to be silenced, and will continue to fight to prevent the elimination of the Children's Psychiatric Center and protect the safety of our children."

“The Western New York Children’s Psychiatric Center’s core mission is to provide high quality, comprehensive behavioral health care services to seriously emotionally disturbed children and adolescents,” said Senator Chris Jacobs. “The Buffalo Psychiatric Center has not treated children in more than 40 years because doctors determined that children have specific and special needs and their treatment should be delivered in a separate facility. These children and their families deserve to have the best care possible in the absolute most appropriate environment.”

Over the past several years, Senator Gallivan, Assemblymember Kearns and other legislators have worked with former patients, family members of patients, workers, community activists and academics to keep the West Seneca CPC open. They argue the tranquil surrounding provided at the West Seneca campus is important for the children who are undergoing significant mental trauma and the families desperately trying to protect these children from danger.