



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senator Murphy call for fence around Hawthorne Cedar Knolls facility

TERRENCE MURPHY May 19, 2017

| ISSUE: **HAWTHORNE CEDAR KNOLLS, COMMUNITY SAFETY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**



Hawthorne, NY - For more than a year Senator Terrence Murphy has been a dedicated advocate for the safety of Mt. Pleasant residents who live around the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls and Pleasantville Cottage School facilities. Today, continuing his diligent efforts focused on ensuring the safety of the students, faculty, staff and Mt. Pleasant residents Senator Murphy called on the Office of Community and Family Services to require the construction of a secure perimeter as a additional component to the corrective action plan that was announced last week. Senator Murphy has the ability to require such action by legislation but is looking forward to working with the department without the need for statutory relief at this time. State Senator Terrence Murphy

said, "Last year at this time, in a response to several community concerns regarding the JCCA Pleasantville Cottage School, I felt obligated to demand a halt of patient intake and the implementation of a corrective action plan which if unsuccessful would have resulted in closure of that facility. Working with OCFS all of our demands were met and we continue our work on making that facility more secure for both the residents and neighbors. Now, we are faced with a similar situation at the JCFS Hawthorne Cedar Knolls School. I have made a similar request to OCFS that was promptly addressed last week. Now that patient intake has been halted, and an initial corrective action plan put forth, I feel it can be augmented to better address the community's concerns by requiring the construction of a secure perimeter fence to control access to and from the facility." In May of 2016, following several serious episodes involving facility residents and members of the community, Senator Murphy sent OCFS a letter demanding the halt of patient intake, a corrective action plan and additional provisions. As a result, OCFS halted patient intake at Pleasantville Cottage School for more than six months and implemented a firm corrective action plan. As a result, the facility has hired a security director, implemented a crisis intervention team, hired additional line staff to ensure youth were supervised at all times, implemented Individual Management Plan's that now include therapeutic restraints for youth at risk of leaving campus without prior authorization. Other remedial and corrective measures included program structure, agency and management accountability, a comprehensive search policy regarding contraband, and developed a community advisory council to improve communication with town leadership, law enforcement and members of the faith community. Mt. Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi said, "Thanks to Senator Murphy, both the administration of JCCA Pleasantville Cottage School and OCFS were brought to the table to address the concerns surrounding that facility. We now find ourselves in a similar situation with JCFS Hawthorne Cedar Knolls. As I expressed to the agencies when I met with them in Albany, if corrective actions are not taken immediately I am in favor of moving toward closing the facility. Working with Senator Murphy, we hope for a similarly positive outcome and thank him for his leadership on these critical issues." On May 8th, 2017, Senator Murphy announced the swift action by OCFS to halt intake at Hawthorne Cedar Knolls following a string of episodes involving residents of the school within the Mt. Pleasant community. On May 16th, 2017, Senator Murphy announced the implementation of the corrective action plan by OCFS for Hawthorne Cedar Knolls which among other aspects focused on developing a strategic action plan to address the pattern of youth leaving the campus without authorization and to demonstrate a sustainable reduction in the volume of those leaving

campus. County Legislator Margaret Cunzio said, "I have lived next to one of the facilities for the past 19 years. There have been incidents at both of these facilities since we have lived there. The concerns of the citizens have previously fallen on deaf ears. I believe that there has been more movement in the past year than ever before. I further believe that we are very fortunate to have people working together to try to make our community safe." Mt. Pleasant Councilwoman Laurie Smalley said, "We need to take a step back and put together a tough but fair plan. We have to work together with Senator Murphy, Supervisor Fulgenzi, Chief Oliva and the members of the Town Council. My first responsibility is to the safety of our residents, but we can't have a knee-jerk reaction to the incidents that have been going on. Moving forward, we have to develop a plan that will help the residents, faculty and the students." Senator Terrence Murphy said, "Once again, I will state that if these corrective action plans are not properly and fully implemented these facilities should be closed. As Special Act Schools, they are created by legislation from Albany lawmakers. If necessary, we will use whatever means to amend or repeal the law if the community's security concerns are not promptly addressed and rectified."