



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Calls for Improvements to Better Protect Those Working Inside NYS Prisons

BRIAN DWYER January 30, 2018

| ISSUE: **CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS, PRISONS, PUBLIC SAFETY**



State Senator Patty Ritchie is calling on the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to address a number of issues at New York State correctional facilities in an effort to better protect those who work in our state's prisons.

Recently, Senator Ritchie toured the five prisons in the region she represents. During her visits, a number of concerns were raised including the need for appropriate staffing levels,

the inflow of drugs into facilities and the quality of safety equipment used by staff. She also strongly urged a review of the recent decision to cancel an anti-contraband policy in light of growing incidents of weapons and drugs that are being hidden inside personal packages to inmates.

On Tuesday, at a Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection, Senator Ritchie raised these concerns with New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Acting Commissioner Anthony Annucci.

“Our correctional officers, and others who work inside New York’s prisons have very difficult, demanding and dangerous jobs,” said Senator Patty Ritchie, who is the daughter of a retired correctional officer and the representative of five of New York State’s correctional facilities.

“We need to ensure that these men and women are able to do their jobs safely. It’s my hope that Acting commissioner Annucci will take this concerns seriously, and look into what can be done to address them, which in turn will make our prisons safer for those who work in them each and every day.”

In addition to safety concerns, Senator Ritchie also addressed the way in which inmates who are serving sentences in North Country prisons receive mental health evaluations. Currently, inmates are transported to other facilities in the state, several hours away, for testing. Senator Ritchie believes the state could save upwards of \$1 million dollars per year by working with the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and dedicating a staff member for evaluations.

The issue of the inability of facilities to retain experienced correctional officers—due in part to an increase in prison assaults and an uptick in violence—was also raised by Senator Ritchie at today’s hearing. Recently, in an effort to retain experienced officers, Senator Ritchie sponsored a bill (S.4077-A) that would guarantee full retirement benefits for surviving

family members of a correctional officer who dies while still serving as a member of the New York State Department of Corrections. The bill passed both the Senate and Assembly before being vetoed by the Governor.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2017-S4077A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Vetoed By Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to death benefits for certain members under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections and community supervision

February 02, 2017

Vetoed

Sponsored by **Patty Ritchie**

Do you support this bill?