



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Sen. Helming Urges Governor to Join Fight to Deny Parole for Teen's Killers

SENATOR PAM HELMING July 3, 2019

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GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that she has sent a letter to Governor Cuomo opposing parole for murderers Richard LaBarbera and Robert McCain and urging the Governor to join the opposition to their early release. Both men were sentenced to 25 years to life in prison after being convicted of sexually assaulting and then murdering 16-year-old Paula Bohovesky, of Pearl River in Rockland County. In May, the New York State Parole Board announced that LaBarbera will be released from prison in July. McCain is scheduled to appear before the Parole Board later this month. Neither man has taken responsibility for the crime they were convicted of.

“Like any teenager, Paula Bohovesky was a young woman in the prime of her life with hopes, dreams, and aspirations for her future. Yet, she was denied the opportunity to live out her life and achieve any of her goals. She didn’t get to graduate high school, attend college, start a career, marry, have children, or do any of the things that young people think about. Paula was not allowed the chance to reach the full potential of her life, so why should Richard LaBarbera and Robert McCain be given the same opportunity? They brutally snuffed out this young life, devastating Paula’s family and everyone Paula touched during her short time on this earth, and they remain without remorse or regret for their reckless actions. Both men

have attempted to place the blame on each other, and neither has taken full accountability for their actions. They do not deserve the chance to live outside of prison walls. I urge Governor Cuomo to join me in efforts to reform the Parole Board and prevent the release of vicious killers,” Senator Helming said.

Paula Bohovesky, an honor student and aspiring actress, was walking home from her part-time job at the local library shortly after 7 p.m. on October 28, 1980. As she walked through the center of town within one block of her parents’ home, LaBarbera and McCain – who had both been drinking at a nearby bar – noticed her crossing an intersection. McCain caught up with Paula, crushed the right side of her skull with a chunk of pavement he grabbed from the ground, dragged her behind an abandoned home, and sexually assaulted her while LaBarbera watched. LaBarbera then sexually assaulted Paula, thinking she was dead; when she stirred, he stabbed her in the back five times with a knife and killed her. Both men have been denied parole seven times since they first became eligible for early release in 2005.

LaBarbera’s upcoming release and McCain’s upcoming hearing provide one more example of why New York State must reform its Parole Board and enact legislation that protects the rights of crime victims and their families instead of those who commit such egregious acts against them. Earlier this year, Senator Helming joined her Senate Republican colleagues in advocating for the Victims Justice Agenda, which contains several provisions to reform the parole process in a way that respects victims and their families over those who have caused them harm and loss. These measures include:

- Requiring the Parole Board to consider all comments and testimony made in a parole hearing when coming to a decision;
- Requiring the Parole Board to review all relevant victim impact statements prior to the conduct of a parole hearing;

- Allowing any person the right to submit a written statement in support of or in opposition to the granting of parole;
- Requiring the unanimous consent of the Parole Board to release an inmate on parole;
- Increasing the time between parole hearings for violent felony offenses from two years to five years.

During the last week of the 2019 legislative session, the Senate Majority approved new members of the Parole Board who were appointed by Governor Cuomo. Senator Helming voted against these appointments. During the interview process, the Parole Board nominees were asked whether they agreed with the release of these heinous murders. Not one of the newly appointed Parole Board members was willing they would not release the killers.

“With the recent releases of cop killers Herman Bell and Judith Clark, and decisions to give other hardened criminals an early release, Governor Cuomo and the Parole Board have led New York State down a dangerous path that says we value remorseless criminals over their victims. By giving criminals the kind of life their victims did not have and by ignoring the rights of crime victims and their families, we are literally adding insult to the injury these families have faced over the devastating loss of their loved ones to such heinous crimes. My Senate colleagues and I will continue standing up for our crime victims and their families and making sure their voices are heard loud and clear. We strongly urge Governor Cuomo to join us in this fight,” Senator Helming said.