



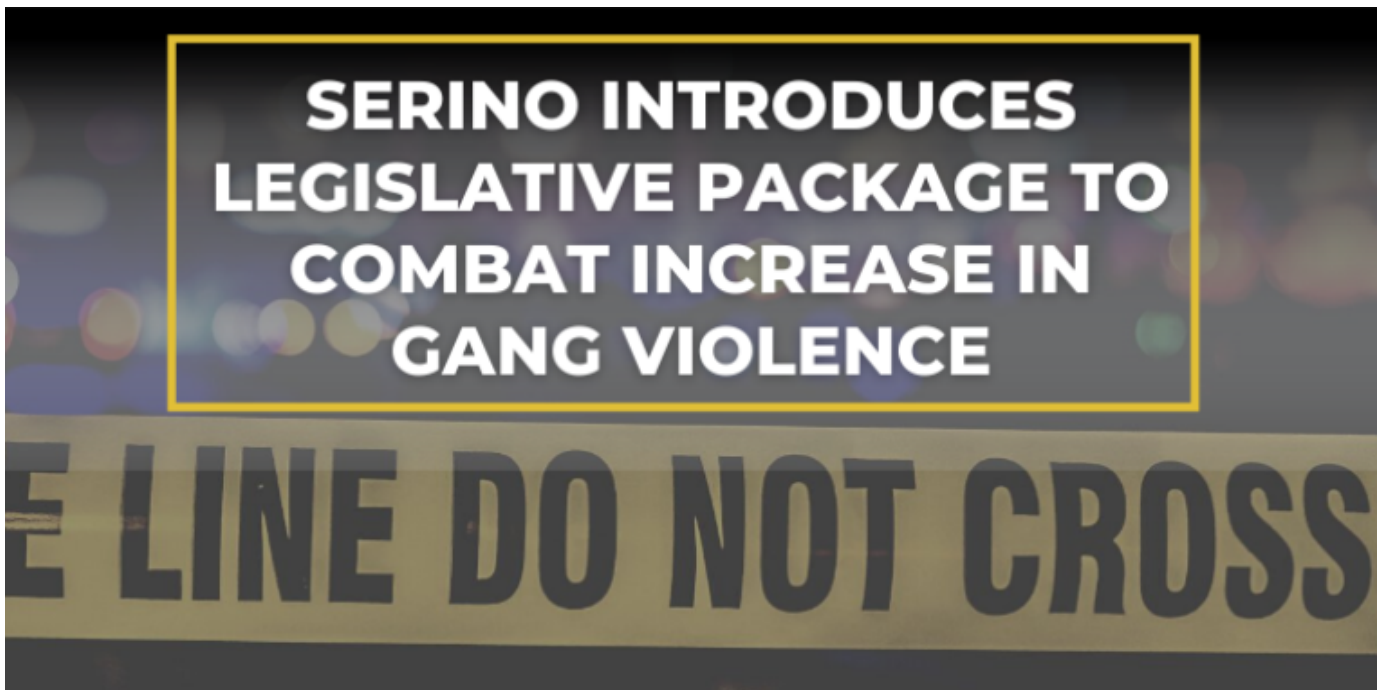
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO INTRODUCES LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE TO COMBAT INCREASE IN GANG VIOLENCE

SUSAN SERINO October 19, 2021

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HYDE PARK, NY—[With gang violence on the rise across the Hudson Valley](#), Senator Sue Serino today announced that she is once again introducing legislation to combat the crisis and provide law enforcement with the tools they need to hold perpetrators of gang violence accountable and improve safety in the community.

“Too many young lives have been cut short by gang violence, and now more than ever we must redouble our efforts to combat violence, empower victims and unite our community,” said Senator Sue Serino.

“While there are a variety of factors that play a role in the increase in gang-related incidents, the impact of the misguided changes to New York’s bail laws cannot be ignored. Persistent perpetrators know they will be released immediately for many crimes as the new laws have removed deterrents and limited opportunities for service providers to intervene. Worse, many perpetrators know they have witnesses running scared and feel totally emboldened as Albany continues to turn a blind eye to the harmful impacts their out-of-touch policies are having on communities across the state. Enough is enough. It is time for real action to reverse these trends and improve public safety immediately.”

Specifically, a package of bills introduced by Senator Serino includes a bill (S. 7446) that would give judges discretion to set bail if there is reasonable cause to believe the offense is connected to criminal street gang or criminal enterprise activity in an effort to deter such crimes. Additional bills in the package would seek to better protect witnesses of gang violence to empower them to come forward and participate in active investigations by allowing their identifying information to be withheld in cases involving gang-related crimes (S. 7447) and elevating the penalties for crimes of tampering with or intimidating a witness (bill number to follow).

Senator Serino is also the primary sponsor of bills introduced in 2020 that aim to protect witnesses from intimidation (S. 6766 and S. 6945) and is renewing her call for their passage after [an in-depth report by the Poughkeepsie Journal](#) exposed the role intimidation plays in silencing witnesses and turning cases cold.

The state’s bail ‘reform’ laws included changes to the discovery process that now requires the prosecution to disclose to a defendant the names and contact information of anyone the prosecutor knows to have information relevant to any offense charged or to any potential defense well before a trial. This change leaves prosecutors unable to guarantee the anonymity of witnesses, leaving them particularly vulnerable to intimidation and threats from perpetrators and their gangs, resulting in many being more reluctant than ever to come forward with evidence that could help take gang members off the streets. Senator Serino’s bills would reverse this misguided change (S. 6766) and would make it a crime for anyone to

intentionally disseminate discovery materials with the intent of intimidating or harassing another individual (S. 6945).

“Witnesses play a key role in law enforcement’s ability to put violent offenders behind bars, and their safety must always be a top priority,” continued Senator Serino. “The changes to the state’s discovery process put witnesses directly in harm’s way, tie the hands of law enforcement and allow too many perpetrators to avoid accountability. If we want to reverse this trend, we have to start by doing all we can to better protect these witnesses.”

Senator Serino has also written to Governor Hochul urging state financial support for the new youth center being built in the City of Poughkeepsie and is working with community leaders to find ways to better engage local youth.

“Combating gang violence will take a multi-pronged approach. While we first must undo the damage that the misguided ‘bail reform’ legislation has caused our communities, we also need to redouble our efforts to ensure our kids have a safe place to spend time, connect with mentors, and take advantage of key community resources,” said Senator Serino. “The COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated previously existing tensions and challenges that too many young people face, and we have to do all we can at every level to ensure they have safe outlets here in our community.”

A copy of that correspondence can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

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