



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Senate Republican Conference Proposes "Safer NY" Plan

FRED AKSHAR June 2, 2022

| ISSUE: **GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION, ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

ALBANY, NY – Senator Fred Akshar and the New York State Senate Republican Conference unveiled the ‘Safer NY Plan,’ an extensive legislative package equipped to prevent targeted violence against New Yorkers. The plan comes in the wake of the tragic events in the City of Buffalo and Uvalde, Texas. The Senate Republican plan involves re-investing in the mental health system, deterring and fighting violent crime, supporting communities with violence prevention Task Forces, and additional measures.

“The shooting in Buffalo has rocked our community and less than two weeks later the horrific attack on the kids attending school in Uvalde, Texas has our nation in mourning. These despicable acts of evil must never happen again. It’s time our state gets serious about enacting real initiatives that can stop violence in its tracks. Our ‘Safer NY Plan’ does just that. The Legislature must act now,” said Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.

Senate Republicans’ ‘Safer NY Plan’ is laser-focused on preventing targeted violence. The package includes:

- Improving Detection and Mental Health Supports in our Schools:

- Investing in a state-funded School Resource Officers (SRO) in every school building; and
- Expanding access to Mental Health services in our schools by establishing a Mental Health Services Coordinator Program.
- Re-Investing in our Mental Health System:
 - Increasing the availability of Mental Health treatment options, by increasing support for inpatient and outpatient treatment through legislation ([S.8508](#)/Savino, Borrello and [S.8856](#)/Palumbo) and by funding both juvenile and adult mental health beds;
 - Appropriately funding our Mental Health system by increasing state mental health funding levels with a focus on funding services for children and young people;
 - Advocating for federal action to increase Mental Health treatment options—specifically eliminating the Medicaid IMD exclusion;
 - Stopping any further reduction of Mental Health beds by placing a 5-year moratorium on bed reductions at state hospitals; and
 - Opening 24/7 Crisis Stabilization Centers throughout New York by supporting local efforts to establish centers and/or opening state-operated centers.
- Deterring and Fighting Violent Crime:
 - Reinstating the Death Penalty in cases of mass murder, murders motivated by hate or racism, murders related to terrorism, murders of law enforcement and first responders ([S.9326](#)/Ortt);
 - Curtailing gun crimes by making any misdemeanor or felony offense involving the use or possession of a firearm, shotgun, or rifle bail eligible ([S.7300](#)/Weik);

- Amending Raise the Age to allow sixteen and seventeen year olds who threaten or engage in violence in schools to be prosecuted as adults in criminal court; and
- Creating the SAFER Communities Grant Program to provide funding to local law enforcement to invest in critical investigatory and prosecutorial resources to increase case clearance rates for homicides and gun crimes.
- Supporting an Integrated Community-wide Approach to Ending Targeted Violence:
 - Creating County-wide Targeted Violence Prevention Task Forces that integrate social services, mental and behavioral health, law enforcement, school districts, higher education, human rights, non-profit organizations, non-profits, faith communities, and local government leaders/personnel to focus on preventing and managing targeted violence threats;
 - Supporting Integration of Behavioral and Mental Health Services into 911 Call Centers;
 - Providing Targeted Violence Threat Assessment training to Law Enforcement, First Responders, School Officials, Social Services and Mental Health Providers, 911 Call Center Staff, College/University Staff, and others; and
 - Supporting Local Efforts Through State Coordination.

“No piece of legislation can undo the disgusting acts of violence that took place in Buffalo and Uvalde, but it’s incumbent on government at every level to examine how we can make New York communities safer for every law-abiding citizen, no matter their race, religion or other distinguishing characteristic. For far too long, New York has walked away from mental health treatment and services for its citizens. Far too many New Yorkers in need of these services have been abandoned by their state and fallen through the cracks, only to be shuffled to either the police or our healthcare workers to handle. Neither of which are adequately supported or equipped to properly help these individuals. This must change immediately. These needs are bigger than petty

politics, and I'm proud to partner with my colleagues in calling on the Governor, the Senate and the Assembly to join us and make these changes for a safer New York today," said Senator Fred Akshar.

"The brutal massacres in Buffalo and Uvalde have left New Yorkers and all Americans heartbroken and searching for solutions to prevent such horrific acts before they end innocent lives. A step forward here in New York would be to target the glaring gaps in our mental health system and crime policies, which raise the risks of senseless violence. The comprehensive package we are advancing, which includes my bill strengthening Kendra's Law and broadening the standard for involuntary hospitalization, represents an effective and common-sense approach. Sadly, we can't turn back the clock, but what we can do is act on these critical proposals to prevent future tragedies," said Senator George Borrello.

"The Safer NY plan puts the emphasis exactly where it should be. It will provide law enforcement officials with the tools they need to protect New Yorkers, while making sure that those individuals experiencing mental health issues are no longer a danger to our communities nor themselves," said Senator Phil Boyle.

"Our state and the nation are horrified by the evil acts of violence in Buffalo and Uvalde, Texas. The perpetrators of these heinous acts must be held accountable and we must work to prevent incidents like these from happening again. That includes making sure our law enforcement agencies, mental health providers and schools have the resources necessary to prevent violent crime and acts of domestic terrorism. This package of legislation will help keep New Yorkers safe." said Senator Patrick Gallivan.

"Like all New Yorkers, I am deeply saddened by the horrific violent acts that occurred recently at a Buffalo supermarket and a Texas elementary school. Everyone should feel safe when going about their daily routines, going to class and living their lives. We need a multi-faceted plan that protects all New Yorkers. The 'Safer NY Plan' helps us to accomplish this

goal. It strengthens the state's neglected mental health system, supports communities and schools and provides law enforcement and local governments with additional resources to prevent targeted and other violent acts from occurring in the future," said Senator Joseph Griffo.

"Hate, racism and violence must have no place in New York. The Safer NY package calls for critical change to help prevent violent crime, hold criminals accountable, and ensure access to mental health services and treatment, which is especially needed in our rural areas. I urge my colleagues to come together to address these issues," said Senator Pam Helming.

"The tragic, shocking murders in Buffalo and Uvalde are a clear and compelling call to action to protect all New Yorkers and make our state a safer place. Our Safer NY Plan contains smart, common-sense solutions including critical re-investments in mental health, reinstatement of the death penalty for mass murderers, and the creation of Countywide Task Forces aimed at violence prevention. Together, our legislative package represents a holistic, comprehensive solution to try and prevent future acts of tragedy and violence and better protect New Yorkers from the deadly rising tide of violence and crime," said Senator Daphne Jordan.

"Only by acknowledging the realities and underlying issues which lead people to commit crime and violence, can we actually make a difference. This package of public safety measures advanced by the Republican Senate Conference does just that. New Yorkers need solutions like these instead of political grandstanding from the left," said Senator Andrew Lanza.

"Our plan to address targeted violence focuses on prevention, remediation and punishment. This is a plan that will actually make people safer, unlike the political talking points offered by the other side. They go back to the same solutions each time and each time they fail, they

double down on that failure. We must get a handle on crime and our package of bills will do just that,” said Senator Mike Martucci.

“Our conference has consistently stated that protecting our families, regardless of where they live in our state, must be the most important goal. By investing in mental health care and enhancing public safety, this package will keep all of our communities safer and that must be everyone’s ultimate goal,” said Senator Mario Mattera.

“Acts of senseless violence have become all too prevalent and we need to take action that will get at the root of the problem. Legislation to improve our mental health system is long overdue along with true community-based programs that can help local leaders with early detection. Enacting the ‘Safer NY Plan’ will save lives – it is crucial that we pass these bills before the end of the legislative session,” said Senator Peter Oberacker.

“Rising violence across this state over the past several years has been alarming to district attorneys, law enforcement officers, and criminal justice experts across the board. We need a more aggressive focus on enacting legislation that puts crime victims, law enforcement, and safer communities first and begins restoring responsibility, sanity, and common sense to criminal justice and public safety in New York State,” said Senator Tom O’Mara.

“The time is now. Lawmakers must adopt a multifaceted approach to stem the tide of New York’s crime surge and prevent future tragedies like the mass shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde. Upgrades and integration of services for mental health, law enforcement, education and other community programs must be made, as well as passing tougher penalties for those who commit heinous crimes,” said Senator Anthony Palumbo.

“The tragic shootings that took place in Buffalo and Uvalde can never happen again. We must take action to prevent this kind of violence from occurring not only in our community

but across NY. The “Safer NY Plan” will address concrete changes that need to be made to help protect and keep our communities safe,” said Senator Ed Rath.

“Like New Yorkers across our state, I remain shocked and saddened by the recent tragedy in Buffalo. It is beyond time to take real, meaningful action to stop situations like this from happening again and to crack down on skyrocketing crime in our state. This plan, which will make critical investments in our mental health system and strengthen penalties for violent crimes, among other efforts, will do just that,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“These senseless acts of terror must be a wake up call and we must redouble our efforts to stomp out hate, racism and violence of any kind. That starts by strengthening our laws to hold perpetrators accountable and bolstering our mental health services to ensure that New Yorkers who are struggling have access to effective services. Passing this package is critical to help improve public safety and I urge my colleagues in both houses to support these important measures,” said Senator Sue Serino.

“We have a public safety crisis and poll after poll shows that people across our state are demanding action. The package of bills my Senate Republican colleagues and I are sponsoring would meaningfully address the violent crime epidemic plaguing our state. With so few days left in the Legislative Session, we must do what’s right and enact common sense reforms that protect our residents,” said Senator Dan Stec.

“The horrific, racist mass shooting in Buffalo and the school shooting in Uvalde were acts of terror and pure evil. The Safer NY Plan is a holistic and innovative approach to help prevent acts of violence by deterring and fighting crime in our communities and investing in mental health care and treatment,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“New Yorkers of all colors and communities must be safe from violence. We must do everything in our power to prevent these disgusting, terrible acts. Our Conference is

committed to doing so," concluded Senate Republican Leader Ortt.