

**William Licata**

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**Subject:** PRESS RELEASE - Kearns Demands Permanent Solution to Keep WNY Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca



**news** from

**Assemblyman Michael P. Kearns**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Elected Officials Demand Permanent Solution to Keep WNY Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca**

### **Attack of a 14 year old girl near Buffalo Psychiatric Center Shows Children Will not be Safe with Adults**

**West Seneca, New York:** State and local elected officials, community activists and family members of affected children with mental illness joined together to keep the WNY Children's Psychiatric Center in its therapeutic rural setting in West Seneca. A recent attack of a 14 year old girl by an outpatient of the Buffalo Psychiatric Center has raised concerns about the safety of children placed in an adult setting for treatment of mental health illnesses.

"I am frustrated and through a letter to Commissioner Ann Sullivan I am demanding that the New York State Office of Mental Health make a decision to permanently keep the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca," said Assemblyman Kearns.

Senator Patrick Gallivan said, "West Seneca CPC cares for our most vulnerable citizens, emotionally disturbed children who deserve and require special treatment in an environment that allows them and their families to feel safe. Nearly 50 years ago, we moved children out of adult psychiatric centers because it was found to not be beneficial or therapeutic to have young patients living among adults. Transferring these patients to an adult-oriented facility like the Buffalo Psychiatric Center would jeopardize their mental health and wellbeing. It's time to make a commitment to keep this center in West Seneca where it belongs."

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Mental Health State Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) said, "The Western New York delegation and OMH have been at odds over potential plans to close the WNY Children's Psychiatric Center and merge it with the Buffalo Psychiatric Center. As I've said all along, the sole focus needs to be putting children first, and I believe that can best be accomplished by keeping the centers separate. We've argued that moving these vulnerable children to an adult facility is a bad idea and would be

devastating to hundreds of families. I will continue the dialogue with the Commissioner of Mental Health and the Governor's office and carry on the fight to keep the WNYCPC from closing."

Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District) said, "Merging the mental health service for children and adults would do a disservice to everyone, because each group has unique concerns. It would be particularly harmful for young people, who can need specialized treatment that may be different from the treatments prescribed for adults. Fortunately, this year's budget preserves services at Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center and we can now work to find a permanent long-term solution."

Sen. Tim Kennedy stated, "Just two months ago, I questioned NYS Office of Mental Health Commissioner Ann Sullivan about the closing of the WNY Children's Psychiatric Center during budget hearings, and asked if the state has truly done its due diligence in exploring other state-owned facilities or standalone sites before moving our children to an adult campus. While I understand the need for New York to be fiscally responsible, we cannot do so at the expense of our most vulnerable children and put their safety at risk. I will continue to fight alongside my state colleagues to make the voices of those children and their advocates heard, and demand New York reconsider this alarming and unsafe move."

Assembly member Robin Schimminger stated, "These children belong in West Seneca, a place that is peaceful, rural and therapeutic. Healing is best achieved in a setting where children are among their peers and where both they and their families feel the most secure. The state needs to make a permanent decision to keep these children in the place that will bring the most stability to their turbulent lives. They deserve the best treatment possible, and I firmly believe the best treatment means staying in West Seneca."

"I will continue to fight against relocation because on virtually every metric this institution excels and exceeds other similar institutions in New York State. WNYCPC has the lowest 30 and 90 day readmission rates in all of New York State. The WNYCPC provides a holistic approach toward resident care. We learned that the family's privacy is respected with plenty of room to meet without having sensitive information shared with others at the facility or in the broader community. The tranquil surrounding provided a much needed pause for both the children who are undergoing significant mental trauma and the families desperately trying to protect these children from hurt, harm and danger. From a safety, cost and health perspectives this proposed action by the New York State Office of Mental Health is unreasonable," Assembly member Kearns stated.

West Seneca Councilman, Eugene Hart stated, "It is important to stand against this ill-advised closure of one of our nations most successful facilities when it comes to treating our children who through no fault of their own experience a psychiatric crisis! We must continue to fight this closure. In fact, I urge the Governor and his staff to consider using the proposed relocation sight on Forest avenue to address our MOST pressing current issue, opioid addiction and the premature loss of so many of our bright young adults to this scourge! Repurposing the Forest Avenue facility and its 32 beds as an emergency treatment center should be a major priority at this time when opioid addition is epidemic and death from over dosing are rising at an exponential rate, most likely doubling for the third year in a row. It is essential that the state and governor take action, repurposing is a wonderful opportunity to provide needed services in both West Seneca and Downtown Buffalo."

The Press Conference was held at Fireman's Park 1000 East & West Road, West Seneca, NY 14224 on Wednesday, April 20, 2016 at 2PM.

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