



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 581

Resolution calling on New York State to reduce the notification period required before the New York State Office of Child and Family Services is permitted to close a correctional facility.

By Council Members Halloran, Fidler, James, Mealy, Reyna, Rose, Williams, Rodriguez, Nelson and Koo

Whereas, The Office of Children and Family Services (“OCFS”) is the state agency responsible for residential and community treatment of New York’s court-placed youth; and

Whereas, Seventy-six percent of youths in New York state correctional facilities are from the New York City area; and

Whereas, In September 2008, Governor David Paterson created a task force to develop a strategic blueprint for transforming the system with the goals of, among other things, reducing reliance on institutionalization, closing underutilized facilities, and reinvesting closure savings back into community alternatives to placement; and

Whereas, Despite an estimated cost of \$200,000 annually per youth, OCFS facilities are failing to rehabilitate youth, as evidenced by the 75 percent rate of recidivism within three years of such youths’ release; and

Whereas, In 2008, Governor Paterson closed five OCFS facilities and proposed reducing excess capacity by downsizing or closing several additional OCFS facilities, including the Pyramid Reception Center in Bronx, New York; and

Whereas, This proposal would produce a savings of approximately \$15 million in Fiscal Year 2012; and

Whereas, Under the New York State Correction Law (“Correction Law”), the commissioner of OCFS is required to provide notice at least 12 months prior to any facility closure; and

Whereas, The lengthy notification period delays facility closures, which results in the unnecessary staffing and operation of empty OCFS facilities; and

Whereas, An example of the negative ramifications of this policy is the Tryon Residential Center in Johnstown, New York where the juvenile facility has not held an inmate since July 2010, but continues to employ approximately 30 people in accordance with the Correction Law; and

Whereas, Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo recently stated that the state cannot continue to employ people at prisons or other public facilities if their jobs are no longer needed; and

Whereas, The state ought to amend the Correction Law by considerably reducing the notification period in order to cut operational costs at underutilized state facilities; and

Whereas, The swift closing of underutilized facilities would save New York State taxpayers millions of dollars; and

Whereas, These savings could be reinvested into alternative to placement programs where youth could receive appropriate rehabilitative services at a fraction of the cost required to place them in state run facilities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on New York State to reduce the notification period required before the New York State Office of Child and Family Services is permitted to close a correctional facility.

WJH
LS# 1643
11/22/10