



## THE OFFICE OF SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR

### Sarah S. Anker

Suffolk County Legislator, 6<sup>th</sup> District

*Chairwoman of the Seniors & Consumer Protection Committee • Vice Chairwoman of the Veterans Committee • Budget and Finance Committee  
Environment, Planning and Agriculture Committee • BNL Legislative Roundtable • Chairwoman of the School Traffic Safety Commission  
Chairwoman of the Suffolk County Heroin and Opiate Advisory Panel • Suffolk County Cancer Prevention and Health Promotion Coalition*

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October 4, 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We recently met with concerned residents in the Longwood community about their local issues, and the topic of mental illness and the homeless presented itself during the discussion. The community has an increased burden in addressing the needs of homeless individuals who present a safety concern to themselves as well as to the community at large.

Suffolk County has experience an extreme increase in the homeless population since the state closed mental health facilities thirty years ago. In addition, the opioid epidemic compounds the issue of addressing mental health, with many families being affected by this devastating epidemic. It has been determined by mental health professionals that drug addiction and mental illness are co-occurring diseases.

In the early 1990's, large psychiatric hospitals were closed. Mental health patients were transitioned to outpatient treatment. Due to this change in policy, we have seen an increase in homelessness throughout New York State, and the mental health community is being failed by the current treatment options. Creating mid-range inpatient mental health facilities would greatly benefit mental health patients that are in need of health services. Many are homeless and therefore are putting themselves and others in danger because they do not meet the threshold of placement or are unable to conform to the rules of the individual outpatient group home. Many need assistance with their medication, personal hygiene, and nutritional needs that a 24 hour mental health facility could provide.

According to the New York State Department of Health's website, "mental disorders continue to be common, widespread and disabling. Every year, more than 1 in 5 New Yorkers has symptoms of a mental disorder and 1 in 10 adults and children experience mental health challenges serious enough to affect functioning in work, family and school life."

We all agreed that there is a great need for inpatient mental health facilities throughout New York State, especially on Long Island, and we ask that you provide additional inpatient mental health facilities for the many residents in need of health services here in Suffolk County.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and we look forward to your response and continued dialog in addressing this import concern.

Sincerely,

Sarah S. Anker  
Suffolk County Legislator  
Sixth Legislative District

Michael Loguercio  
Brookhaven Town Councilman  
Fourth Council District

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