



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

March 2010

Senator Foley Responds to Sachem PTA's Efforts to Combat Drug Addiction by Introducing Denise's Law

State Senator Brian X. Foley introduced Denise's Law to address an epidemic of drug addiction on Long Island and across the state. Sachem PTA worked with Senator Foley and New York State PTA to create legislation to help families and guardians get drug addicted minors needed treatment in a timely manner.

Named after Denise Gerardi, a former Sachem High School student who passed away in 2008 following an accidental overdose, Denise's Law will help parents get detoxification treatment for teens. Denise's Law (S.6361) features two important provisions to fight drug addiction:

- 1) It will allow parents or guardians to petition a court to require an examination, and if needed, detoxification, for minors who are suffering from addiction. Currently parents often check teens into rehab, only to have them check themselves out before detoxification is finished. Because detoxification is a central to recovery, it is crucial that parents have the ability to keep minors in detox until they can begin the treatment process.
- 2) It requires that drug addiction diagnosis and detoxification – as well as certain other mental, nervous and emotional conditions – be covered by health insurance companies. This provision is essential to enable families to access needed treatment.

Sachem PTA continues to work with Senator Foley and New York State PTA to generate support for Denise's Law. They have held meetings with State Senators and staff in Albany and Long Island to encourage legislators to co-sponsor the bill and work for its passage. Legislative response to the proposal has been overwhelming. Awareness of the problem of drug addiction and barriers to detoxification is growing – as is support for Denise's Law.

For further information go to:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/press-release/sen-foley-introduces-legislation-combat-growing-drug-addiction-crisis-long-island>

<http://www.newsday.com/long-island/nassau/group-seeks-heroin-detox-help-for-teens-from-pta-state-1.1581030>

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=S06361>

New York Maintains Charter School Cap, But Will Try Again to Improve Race to the Top Application

One of the primary criteria for federal Race to the Top funding is increasing access to charter schools. In New York, that means raising the cap that currently limits the number of charters to 200. Governor Paterson proposed doubling the number of charter schools to strengthen New York's application, but the State Legislature did not agree.

New York State PTA recognizes the importance of Race to the Top funding and acknowledges charter schools as an avenue to reform. However, NYS PTA remains concerned about the

financial drain that charter schools place on many school districts. Changes must be made to charter school law to reduce the negative fiscal impact that many traditional public schools experience when districts must also fund charters. Additionally, charter schools be open to all students, adhere to state and federal laws governing public schools, include meaningful parent involvement, be accountable to local school boards, and be funded in a way that does not undermine traditional public schools. Only when these inherent problems of current law are corrected, should consideration be given to any changes in the cap.

The winners of Phase 1 grants will be announced in April – along with feedback from the U.S. Department of Education. A second round of applications must be submitted by June 1 and the winners will be announced in the fall.

For more information, go to:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

http://www.state.ny.us/governor/press/press_01191006.html

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/Press/20100119b/>

Amanda's Law Goes Into Effect

According to the National Fire Protection Association, almost nine out of every 10 reported non-fire carbon monoxide incidents take place in the home. Amanda's Law, named after Amanda Hansen, a 16-year old who, while sleeping over at a friend's house, died due to carbon monoxide leaking from a defective boiler, went into effect on February 22, 2010.

The law will require all one-family and two-family homes, dwellings located in condominiums or cooperatives, and multiple dwellings to have a carbon monoxide detector installed to prevent the "silent killer" from leaking into homes To learn more, go to:

http://www.legislativegazette.com/Articles-c-2010-02-16/65485.113122_Amandas_Law_goes_into_effect.html

Washington Agenda for Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools, Healthy Choices for America

First Lady Michelle Obama, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin have announced plans to help Americans lead healthier lives through better nutrition, regular physical activity, and by encouraging communities to support healthy choices. Michele Obama and Kathleen Sebelius have launched their "Let's Move" Campaign to fight childhood obesity; and Surgeon General, Dr. Regina M. Benjamin addressed the epidemic in her report: "The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation 2010". Dr Benjamin states:

"If we do not reverse these trends, researchers warn that many of our children—our most precious resource—will be seriously afflicted in early adulthood with medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. This future is unacceptable....Every one of us has an important role to play in the prevention and control of obesity. Mothers, fathers, teachers, business executives, child care professionals, clinicians, politicians, and government and community leaders—we must all commit to changes that promote the health and wellness of our families and communities. As a nation, we must create neighborhood..."

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/obesityvision/obesityvision2010.pdf>

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/01/20100128c.html>