



NEWS

New York State
Public Employees Federation
AFL-CIO

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FOR RELEASE: Immediate Monday, July 24, 2006

PEF urges governor to sign the Judi Scanlon bill

Murder victim's daughter makes personal appeal

Buffalo - The New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) is calling on Gov. George Pataki to protect mental health workers by signing the Judi Scanlon bill (S.207 Maziarz/A.2570 Hoyt).

At a press conference held today on the steps of the Erie County court house, PEF President Roger Benson said the bill, if signed by the governor, will provide basic protections that mental health workers deserve and could possibly help avoid another tragedy such as the Judi Scanlon murder.

"Judi Scanlon told co-workers about her concerns about safety on the very morning she was murdered," Benson said. "She raised the red flag and questioned why intensive case managers should have to go to client's homes alone. The Judi Scanlon bill would give mental health workers the option of conducting home visits in pairs."

Judi Scanlon was murdered by one of her mentally ill clients, Diane Wylie in November 1998. Scanlon's daughter Kelly Scanlon-North has worked tirelessly since her mother's murder advocating for safeguards.

"Something should have been done a long time ago to protect workers like my mother," Scanlon-North said. "Gov. Pataki has that opportunity before him right now. I pray he'll do the right thing and sign this bill to change the way places of employment protect their employees."

State Senator George Maziarz of Newfane and Assemblymember San Hoyt of Buffalo sponsored the bill. "Mental health workers go into the trenches daily putting themselves at risk to help people in dire need," Sen. Maziarz said. "Signing this bill into law will protect hardworking case managers whose workplaces are not only supervised office settings, but houses and apartments where, for caution's sake, you have to expect the unexpected. Looking back, these protections should have been on the books years ago, before Judi Scanlon ever knocked on Diane Wylie's door."

Assemblymember Hoyt commented, "My legislation will provide critical protection to the caseworkers who are placed daily in situations where there is considerable risk. As a state legislator, I have an obligation to provide for the well being of both mental health patients and the caseworkers who care for them. If there is any good to come of Judi Scanlon's tragic death, it is greater protection for the caseworkers and the enhanced training that will provide better quality care for the patients and their families."

Erie County District Attorney Frank Clark also attended today's press conference. His office successfully prosecuted the case against Wylie who was sentenced to the maximum, 25 years to life in prison.

PEF is the state's second-largest state-employee union, representing 54,000 professional, scientific and technical employees.

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