

Senator Montgomery
Capitol Building
711 LOBS
Albany, NY 12247

February 26, 2010

Dear Senator Montgomery,

We wanted to take a moment to thank you for the time you spent with the PEF members and staff on Tuesday, February 23rd. It is apparent that you are concerned with doing what is best for youth in the Juvenile Justice system. PEF is also interested in improving the system to the benefit of the youth we serve.

During our meeting you referenced the Missouri Model as one New York can learn from and we are in agreement, our present system needs reforming. Dennis Kehm, Jefferson County Circuit Judge, is the head of the commission overseeing the juvenile corrections system in Missouri. He was quoted in an article stating, "The reform (in Missouri) worked because it happened incrementally. Rather than revolutionizing juvenile corrections with a single bill, Missouri experimented and built on successes." We believe New York can also make the needed system changes to improve programming for our children. Simply closing center after center, without proof that another existing program works, is not the best plan. Tryon has received numerous children from private programs. Often it is because the youth are too difficult behaviorally, many due to previous trauma and serious mental illness, or they AWOL. Unfortunately, many commit additional crimes while AWOL. The employees at OCFS Facilities are very concerned about the future of these youth if our programs are no longer an option. PEF would like to be part of the solution. The professionals presently working with our youth have ideas and can give realistic solutions for reforming our system. By closing programs you will lose those people with the experience and knowledge who can help make the necessary changes.

In closing, we again wish to extend the invitation to visit an OCFS facility and see the good work PEF employees are doing, prior to making a final decision to close more facilities.

Thank you again for you time.

Bill Agresta
PEF Division 218
Council Leader

Donna Shelton
PEF Division 218
Assistant Leader