



New York State
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December 16, 2009

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The Times Union
Albany, NY
To The Editor,

So, let me get this straight. The juvenile justice system in New York is a failure. It is suggested judges are inappropriately placing youths in state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) facilities. Yet the commissioner responsible for the operation of this agency takes no responsibility? I proudly served as a member of the Task Force on Transforming Juvenile justice in my role as the leader of the union representing teachers, counselors and psychologists who work at these facilities. For years we have submitted recommendations to the commissioner and the governor on ways to improve the system. My members have indentified the problem areas, many of which are outlined in the report. However our red flags went unnoticed. It is Commissioner Gladys Carrion who failed to address the nuts and bolts of reform. She has had more than two years to lead but instead has failed our troubled youths, their families and our communities. The Task Force found that there are "some private and state-operated facilities in New York that do offer positive, rehabilitative environments." Yet these are the very facilities that Carrion repeatedly targets for closure. If treatment of youth is really her priority, why does she persist in closing the state's best resource for treatment? This system can be repaired if the majority of the report's recommendations are implemented. We urge legislative leaders to proceed with caution however and put the best interest of our youths ahead of the commissioner's personal agenda.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Brynien,
President