

**P R E S S R E L E A S E F R O M L E G I S L A T O R
K A T E B R O W N I N G**

**MEDIA ADVISORY
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SOBER HOME HEARINGS SCHEDULED

***Browning and Welfare to Work Commission
Seek Public Input/Government Reform***

Hauppauge, NY – Legislator Kate Browning (WF-Shirley) joined today with civic leaders and welfare to work commission members to announce two public hearings scheduled in October that will focus on gathering input aimed at regulating and reforming “sober homes.” Joining her were Dr. Richard Koubek, Chair of the Welfare to Work Commission, Peggy Boyd, Co-Chair of the Sober Homes Hearing Committee, and Roland Hampson of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services.

Two public hearings are being held, the first at the Suffolk County Legislature on October 23 and the second on October 30 at Riverhead Town Hall. Both hearings are open to the public and will take place from 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Recent media coverage has brought attention to the closing of many unscrupulous, so called “sober homes” that exploit their chemically-dependent residents, which impacts surrounding neighborhoods. These homes have become profitable for landlords who are not providing a safe haven for recovering addicts. Since many of these vulnerable people receive public assistance, Legislator Browning, who chairs the Health and Human Services Committee and the Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature, charged with making recommendations to the legislature on welfare policies, have begun to focus on what can be done to create safe and effective housing for people in recovery, housing that does not negatively impact communities.

Legislator Browning has successfully shut down sober homes that have not been providing the services addicts need, but has become frustrated with the lack of regulation. She approached the commission, whose members share her concerns about the lack of regulation and failure to license sober homes.

“We need to reform the system so that oversight is provided, and we are going to examine sober homes in the context of the needs of the chemically dependent,” stated Browning. “We are seeking input from experts from housing and treatment services, as well the public stake holders who can speak about the need for responsible and effective housing options.”

Elected officials from the federal, state, county, town, and village governments have been invited to participate along with the public. The hearings will focus on testimony that addresses several questions:

1. What is a sober home?
2. Are sober homes doing their intended jobs?
3. How should sober homes properly fit in their community?
4. What types of sober homes do we need?
5. What is the ideal sober home for a community?
6. What can New York State, Suffolk County, town and village governments do to create, regulate and monitor this housing?

The hearings will lead to a report to the Suffolk County Legislature with recommendations for

action at all levels of government.