

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



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COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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State Inaction on Sober Homes Continues to Endanger Lives and Communities

County Legislation Targets Funding to Unscrupulous House Operators



Pictured left to right: (Nora Milligan, representing LIRA; Legislator Kate Browning; Legislator Bill Lindsay; Legislator Rob Calarco; Krystle Stoddard; Josh Slaughter, Chief of Staff to Leg. Browning and Anthony Rizzuto representing FIST.)

Blue Point, NY – With a notoriously dangerous home behind them, Suffolk County Legislators, recovery advocates and community members announced County legislation that seeks to prohibit taxpayer funds from being paid to two corporations that operate unregulated homes in Suffolk County. Officials also made a renewed call for State legislation to regulate an industry that continues to go unchecked as the drug epidemic rises throughout the Country. Legislator Kate Browning (WF-Shirley) is the sponsor of Introductory Resolution 1577-17 that would ban payments to Cion Solutions Inc. and Solutions House Inc. Legislator Bill Lindsay (D-Holbrook) and Legislator Rob Calarco (D-Patchogue) are both co-sponsors.

For decades local governments have been lobbying New York State to regulate homes that are advertised as a safe, sober living environment, when in fact drugs, intimidation and unsafe conditions are the norm. Due to a lack of regulation, no standards exist and no agency is responsible to hold landlords or operators accountable. The result are extremely negative impacts to surrounding communities, frequent overdoses, a larger burden on emergency services and high rates of relapse or death for tenants living in these homes.

“Far too many lives have been lost and communities negatively impacted without any action from New York State to get control over these homes,” stated Legislator Browning. “Our tax dollars are lining the pockets of slumlords while contributing to drug addiction and even death. Enough is enough.”

Legislator Browning created the Suffolk County Sober Home Oversight Board in 2011, which was charged with addressing the lack of standards for sober homes. Today, Suffolk County is the only municipality in New York State that has regulated homes, but it's a voluntary pilot program and needs State legislation to regulate and enforce standards on all recovery homes. The lack of State action has allowed corporations such as Cion Solutions Inc. and Solutions House Inc. to collect taxpayer funds while providing no services and operating homes that are plagued with abuse and tenant complaints.

“For far too long, our most vulnerable citizens have been underserved at a critical time in their treatment by these so-called ‘sober homes’,” said Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco. “Unscrupulous landlords are blighting our community with these unsafe and substandard homes that are taking advantage of people and our County. It is time we do something about it, and we are calling upon New York State to be a partner in this process.”

“Collaboration from all levels and forms of government along with the rehabilitation community is necessary to give those suffering from addiction their deserved chance at recovery,” said Legislator Lindsay. “Unscrupulous landlords who think they are above the law and subject addicts to unsavory and unsafe living conditions just increase the likelihood of relapse. I look forward to working with our County and State reps to improve the standards of rehabilitation, prevention, and intervention for those on the road to recovery and address the rampant addiction problem within our communities.”

“LIRA is dedicated to addressing the needs of our recovery community and today we were honored to stand alongside committed legislators to help highlight the vital need for safe, supportive, recovery housing,” stated Nora Milligan, spokesperson for Long Island Recovery Association. “Our organization will continue to advocate for sorely needed regulation of recovery homes on Long Island.”

I.R. 1577-17 will be voted on at the July 18, 2017 Education and Human Services Committee. If approved out of committee, the legislation will be voted on by the full legislature on July 25 in Hauppauge.

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