

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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**Suffolk to Establish Child Fatality Review Team**

*Legislator Hahn's legislation will create panel to examine unexplainable and violent child deaths with goal of understanding causes and possible resources that will prevent future losses.*

**Hauppauge, NY** – The Suffolk County Legislature has voted to establish a 13 member panel to review all childhood fatalities within the County deemed to be unanticipated, suspicious or the direct result of physical trauma. Under the bill sponsored by the Legislature's Majority Leader Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) and unanimously approved this week, the new Child Fatality Review Team will be comprised of medical, child welfare, social service and law enforcement professions who will be charged with examining the facts and circumstances relating to deaths of children under the age of 18 deemed to be either unexplainable or the result of violence, including self-inflicted harm. The team's reviews will not be used to assign criminal or civil liability in death cases involving children or for prosecutorial proposes.

According to Legislator Hahn, the panel's focus is on "identifying the underlying causes of a child's death and what resources, if any, may have prevented that tragic outcome."

"As a culture we strongly hold that children aren't supposed to die. When that understanding is challenged by a child's death, natural or otherwise, there is a reflexive and necessary motivation to uncover the reasons why and ways to prevent similar circumstances from leading to additional losses."

[More]

“Suffolk County takes the public health and safety of all our residents, especially our most vulnerable very seriously,” said Suffolk County Chief Medical Examiner Michael Caplan, M.D. who will serve as the team’s chairperson. “By assembling this review team and collaboratively studying the recent losses of life in Suffolk County, we may be able to prevent similar tragedies in the future and provide potentially life-saving services to those who may be in need of them.”

The data reviewed by the Child Fatality Review Team will be stripped of all identifiable information and its records will be confidential. Any reports generated by the team will be submitted to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services upon their completion.

The bill now goes to County Executive Steve Bellone for his signature. Once signed, the team will hold its first meeting within ninety days and then roughly quarterly thereafter.

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