

18TH DISTRICT
LISA M. BOSCOLA

SENATE BOX 203018
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3018
PHONE: (717) 787-4236
FAX: (717) 783-1257

MAIN STREET COMMONS
559 MAIN STREET, SUITE 270
BETHLEHEM, PA 18018
PHONE: (610) 868-8667
FAX: (610) 861-2184
TOLL FREE: 1-877-535-1818

DOMINICK A. LOCKWOOD BUSINESS CENTER
600 MAIN STREET, SUITE 112
STROUDSBURG, PA 18360
PHONE: (570) 420-2938
FAX: (570) 420-2941

WEST CATASAUQUA PROFESSIONAL BUILDING
2123 NORTH FIRST AVENUE, SUITE A-4
WHITEHALL, PA 18052
PHONE: (610) 266-2117
FAX: (610) 266-2169



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

CONSUMER PROTECTION & PROFESSIONAL
LICENSURE, MINORITY CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
JUDICIARY
TRANSPORTATION
BANKING AND INSURANCE
GAME & FISHERIES
DEMOCRATIC POLICY

LEGISLATIVE SPORTSMEN CAUCUS
AMERICAN - ITALIAN CAUCUS
FIREFIGHTER & EMERGENCY SERVICES CAUCUS
AUTISM CAUCUS

TESTIMONY:

PROPOSED CLOSING OF ALLENTOWN STATE HOSPITAL

March 5, 2010

By Senator Lisa M. Boscola

Unfortunately, due to state budget hearings at the Capitol in Harrisburg, I was unable to attend the Department of Public Welfare's (DPW) public hearing that took place at the Four Points Sheraton on Airport Road in Hanover Township, Lehigh County. I respectfully request this testimony concerning the proposed closing of Allentown State Hospital (ASH) be entered into the official public record of that meeting.

Many of my colleagues and I who represent the greater Lehigh Valley area were disappointed to learn of the Administration's plan to close ASH. The administrative decision was made to close ASH because bureaucrats in Harrisburg believe that community based services best serve the needs of the clients. The belief is those clients "do better" when given the opportunity to be enrolled in a community based situation as opposed to being "institutionalized." While community based services should be the goal, the need for institutional care will always be needed.

For this reason, DPW and members of the Administration should understand the necessity for ASH to continue its current operation.

ASH has a strong history of success in the discharge process and transition to community-based (CB) services for their patients. Since the goal is community based services, therefore, this is a major reason that I believe ASH should remain open and be used as a facility for other residents/patients in other state hospitals to be transferred to who are not as successful in transitioning them to community based services. Success should not be a reason for closure.

Also, from a historical perspective, ASH became the first of its kind within the United States to eliminate seclusion rooms as a treatment modality for individuals in crisis. What used to be an outdated and long standing use of physical restraints and unscheduled medications were replaced by extensive staff training in verbal intervention and communications that eventually increased understanding of the individual in crisis. ASH has helped transform the manner in which mental health patients are treated in Pennsylvania.

Furthermore, this facility, their administration and staff have provided excellent care to those truly in need. In fact, of the seven state hospitals this facility has one of the best track records within the Commonwealth.

Colleagues of mine in the Senate also have concerns about closing state hospitals. I especially have concerns when it comes to community transition for those long-term patients who have been at a state hospital for many years. I understand that not everyone can reside within our local communities and that we need to keep a safe haven for some of our most severe cases. With ASH's track record there is a great need to keep this hospital open for those patients within our Lehigh Valley community—a community that is the third largest metropolitan area in Pennsylvania.

The Lehigh Valley (Northampton and Lehigh Counties) is the one area of Pennsylvania that continues to grow in population. With this enhanced growth, ASH provides a necessary and needed service that should remain within our region for years to come.

I respectfully request the DPW and Administration reconsider the closing of ASH and find an alternative to the proposed closing policy.

As State Senator representing Northampton, Monroe and Lehigh Counties, I am opposed to closing ASH and I believe this facility should continue to successfully operate well into our future.