



# NEWS From Assemblyman 120<sup>th</sup> Assembly District **Bill Magnarelli**

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**\*\*\*Column\*\*\***

## **Magnarelli continues fighting to keep Hutchings open to protect quality health care and local jobs**

For nearly three decades, the Hutchings Psychiatric Center has provided quality health care to families in our community. The facility not only provides invaluable mental health care services for adults and teens in Onondaga County, it also contributes to the local economy by employing hundreds of people in our region. However, if the governor succeeds in shutting Hutchings' doors, patients will be farmed out to various facilities far away from their friends and families, and our families will lose good paying jobs.

In February, I co-hosted a legislative hearing to discuss what closing Hutchings would mean to local families. The governor's Mental Health Commissioner defended the closing, citing that Hutchings requires too many repairs and is too costly to run. This shows a concern with the "bottom line" rather than quality, responsible care — and the patients and staff of Hutchings will ultimately pay the price.

But exactly how much will New York actually save by closing Hutchings? The governor and his commissioner fail to show how this will save the state money. The plan does not take into account the cost of transporting patients to other facilities, the cost of maintaining an empty building if it's not sold, and the economic fall-out of eliminating 350 local jobs. If there are benefits from closing Hutchings, we deserve to see the proof.

In March, I supported an Assembly budget proposal to keep Hutchings open. The proposal also requires that a formal, detailed plan is submitted to the Legislature regarding the future use of all state-operated mental health facilities — making sure families are included in the decision-making process. This would keep the governor from closing institutions like Hutchings without first considering how it would affect patients, their families and staff.

Closing Hutchings is unacceptable, and I will continue fighting to keep it open so Central New Yorkers will not lose the quality care and employment Hutchings provides.