

# Ulster County Legislature



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Statement from Ulster County Legislator Robert Parete on the passage of the Ulster County School-based Mental Health and School Safety Act of 2013**

I am pleased by the overwhelming bipartisan support for Local Law #1, or commonly known as the Ulster County School-based Mental Health and School Safety Act of 2013, which I authored. The passage of this Law is another step in a long battle for safer learning environments and healthier communities. That said; I call on the County Executive to sign this bill into law without delay.

I truly appreciate the uncompromising support from a vast majority of my colleagues during last night's session of the County Legislature. For those who opposed Local Law #1, I regret not doing enough to educate those Legislators on the significance of this Law. That said; I genuinely hope that three members of the Legislature's Health Committee Chairman who all voted against this Law, including Robert Aiello (R-Saugerties), Deputy Chairman Jeanette Provenzano (D-Kingston) and Majority Leader Ken Ronk (R-Walkkill), will hold public hearings throughout Ulster County to better understand the seriousness of this topic and provide even more solutions in the future. Families are in desperate need of services for their children ranging from, but not limited to, student counseling, anti-bullying programs, eating disorders awareness and prevention programs, school dropout reduction, alternatives to violence and gangs, and suicide prevention to name just a few. As I have tried to stress to my colleagues in the past, the lack of adequate mental health services significantly affects school attendance and limits academic success for students suffering from mental health issues. The stigmatization of people dealing with mental health issues combined with the economic pressures on schools has reduced access to mental health services in Ulster County. Recent funding cuts to Ulster County-based mental health programs have only exacerbated this gap in services.