

Must close Kendra's Law cracks

I am sick of self-serving elected officials throwing their hands in the air and claiming they're powerless to prevent violence by the mentally ill. They are not.

Families like mine — who have a relative with a mental illness — have repeatedly told them what to do to prevent these bloody tragedies committed by our loved ones.

We told them before mentally ill Eric Bellucci stabbed both his parents on Staten Island; before



**DJ
JAFJE**

mentally ill Terrance Hale stabbed Officer (Eder) Loor in East Harlem; before mentally ill Aston Barth killed Jason Campbell in Central Islip; and before a woman pushed Sunando Sen onto the tracks in Sunnyside on Thursday.

The Legislature should pass and Cuomo should sign the bipartisan Kendra's Law Improvement Act. They should pass it now before someone else dies. Kendra's Law was passed over the objection of mental health officials in 1999, but they've successfully lobbied to preserve loopholes. Kendra's

Law allows courts to order a small group of people with very serious mental illnesses and a history of violence to stay in treatment as a condition for staying in the community.

The Kendra's Law Improvement Act would close cracks that allow those who could benefit to escape treatment. It closes the crack that allows mental health officials to release mentally ill prisoners and involuntarily committed patients to the streets without first determining if they need mandatory treatment to stay safe. It closes the crack that lets one county refuse to enforce a treatment order that emanates from another county when the patient moves. It closes the crack that allows court orders to expire after six months without a review.

Failing to close the loopholes puts patients and the public at risk. It's time for our legislators to force the system to do what is right rather than rubber-stamp what is wrong.

DJ Jaffe is Executive Director of Mental Illness Policy Org. <http://mentalillnesspolicy.org>

NY Daily News 12/29/12