

February 20, 2020

**RE: Closure of the Sgt. Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy, Delaware County**

Dear Legislator:

As a constituent and a state employee represented by the Public Employees Federation (PEF), I am extremely concerned by the Governor's proposal to close the Sgt. Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) in Delaware County. This facility is run by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

The Governor's rationale for closing this facility is due to underutilization. The facility has a capacity for 25, but the current census is 8. However, with the continuation of the "Raise the Age" initiative, places like the Youth Leadership Academy will be in higher demand. Youth Leadership Academy is currently one of only four limited secure facilities for males within the OCFS's Division of Juvenile Justice and Opportunities for Youth.

The facility offers many services, such as counseling, vocational opportunities, mental health services, equine therapy and gardening. These are the types of programs that are specifically designed to assist these young males and would help them in a variety of ways, including avoiding future incarceration with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS).

Youth programs and facilities like YLA are an important part of the juvenile justice system. They should be promoted and fully utilized, so that youthful offenders can be rehabilitated and not sent farther away from home to another OCFS in western New York or the Southern Tier.

As my elected representative, I kindly ask that you work with the leadership in your house to **keep the OCFS's Sgt. Henry Johnson Youth Leadership Academy in Delaware County open and serving the state's youth**. Thank you for your time, attention and consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,

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