

3/9/23

Good morning. In February's report to the Health and Human Services committee, Mr. Liddle wrote that the Citizen's Committee for Children of New York's scoring of Sullivan County as number 54 out of 62 counties showed that Sullivan County is getting healthier. That is just not true. The Robert Wood Johnson's health rankings are the benchmark, but the Citizen Committee's numbers are also nothing to be bragged about just because for once, we're not the bottom of the list of counties. This report describes the conditions of children and families using different criteria than the Health Rankings, which looks at the health of the entire population. Sadly, it's the health indicators which are the decisive factors that brings down our overall score on this report; specifically, the data about our youth's health. In 2020, our teen birth rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15-19) was 20.9%, compared to the state's rate of 7.6%. That's 3 times as high as the state rate. Teens out of work and school, aged 16-19 is 11.4%, the state rate is 4.9%. More than twice as high. Children without health insurance are 5.8%, with the state rate of 2.5%. That's more than twice as much as the state rate. The Citizen's Committee report compares data from 2018 to 2020, and our statistics got worse across the board over that time, not better. I for one don't like being lied to and the public should not stand for it. Everybody employed by the county works for the public, and the public trust was betrayed by the falsehoods in last month's report.

Yes, our opioid deaths have decreased. I don't know if that's all due to the good work of Wendy Brown and Melissa or not. What I do know is that there's not enough work being done to improve our community's health. Mr. Liddle was tasked with improving the health rankings two years ago when the Chairman decided in his own self-interest not to talk about our Health Rankings anymore. In this month's report, which was only posted yesterday, in violation of Open Meeting Law, I see that we've outsourced most of our mental health, crisis, substance abuse and treatment services, but services still remain inadequate to the community's need; for example, there's still a waitlist of 404 for RSS housing. The report is loaded with acronyms; the Commissioner might improve it by following the rule for acronyms so that everybody, not just insiders, can read it.

Lastly, I've been told that 22 staff from DFS have left in the first two months of this year. I don't see that number reflected in the monthly report, which has only risen to 23 from 20 vacancies at DFS. That's an awful lot of staff leaving, if it's true.

Lise Kennedy