
Steinhardt Blasts Bill that Would Set Megan's Law and Other Violent Offenders Free, Without Ever Facing Jail

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"We've seen what's happened in places like Chicago and San Francisco where prosecutors have refused to hold criminals accountable for breaking the law," said Steinhardt (R-23). "Without the threat of prosecution and incarceration, criminals don't hold back. They commit more property crimes, they victimize more people, and they transform towns and cities that were once safe places into war zones where families and businesses are at risk. It's unbelievable that Trenton Democrats want to do this to New Jersey."

Steinhardt said Senate Democrats are moving a bill, [S-524](#), that would give prosecutors full discretion to divert criminals into a prosecutor-run "Mental Health Diversion Program" before they ever see a courtroom.

While New Jersey law already prohibits an offender who is "mentally incompetent" from being

tried, convicted, and incarcerated, the new legislation sets a substantially lower bar to divert offenders into "appropriate case management and mental health services" – whatever that is. The bill explicitly states that the diversion program is to be non-custodial.

"Under the Democrats' bill, an offender would be able to hire a social worker to say they experienced depression, and that could be enough to get them into the diversion program," said Steinhardt. "Any criminal who actually ends up in jail under this law would have to be a complete idiot."

Although the bill purports to make certain offenses "ineligible" for diversion, prosecutors ultimately would be authorized to make "case-by-case determinations" in cases that involve Megan's Law offenses, first- and second-degree crimes, violent crimes, offenses with a deadly weapon, and more.

To add insult to victims' injuries, those released would be treated to a "graduation ceremony" and have their records expunged.

"It's inexplicable that a prosecutor could unilaterally decide to divert a child molester or a violent criminal who shot someone from the criminal justice system without the approval of a judge," added Steinhardt. "This proposed law puts way too much power in the hands of prosecutors and subjects them to almost zero oversight. This is exactly what you would do if you wanted to turn New Jersey into California."