



The banner features the University of Phoenix logo on the left. In the center, a woman with blonde hair is smiling. To her right, the text reads 'NOW OFFERING Bachelor of Science in Psychology'. Further right, it says 'Online education that gives you an edge.' At the bottom right, there is a red button with the text 'LEARN MORE' and three white arrows pointing to the right.

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Group seeks support for mentally ill

Mental health advocates ask Spitzer, Faso to work for housing

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ALBANY — Mental-health advocates on Wednesday asked gubernatorial candidates to pledge they would expand the number of housing units for people with serious psychiatric disabilities.

It can cost more than \$300,000 per person each year for housing in what most people would consider unfortunate circumstances, such as a hospital bed or a prison cell, said Barbara Bartoletti of the League of Women Voters, a member of the New York State Campaign for Mental Health Housing.

"We certainly call on both candidates to think seriously about this plan as they talk about not only efficient and effective social policy for New Yorkers but certainly humane social policy for New Yorkers," Bartoletti said.

Republican John Faso's campaign met with members of the coalition Wednesday, spokeswoman Susan Del Percio said. She did not say specifically whether Faso would back all aspects of the coalition's plan but said Faso would talk with the groups about reform if elected. "They raised some very serious concerns and addressed the need for reform, which as governor John Faso would support," she said.

A spokeswoman for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Also Wednesday, a new Quinnipiac University poll showed that Spitzer has widened his lead over Faso to more than 50 percentage points, setting the stage for what could be an unprecedented runaway election. Among registered voters, Spitzer leads 69 percent to 18 percent, compared with 65-17 in the last Quinnipiac poll.

The Campaign for Mental Health Housing estimates that more than 70,000 people with mental illnesses lack access to appropriate housing, and the number is growing, said Steve Coe, chairman of the coalition and executive director of Community Access in New York City.

The campaign wants the state to redirect money and resources that currently go to expensive emergency services, he said. Advocates are calling for:

- Preserving about 30,000 existing units of supportive and licensed housing for the mentally ill.
- Developing at least 35,000 new units statewide over the next 10 years.
- Setting up a mental-health housing waiting list to assess the unmet need.

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