



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

Senator Addabbo Hosts 2-Part Podcast on Drugged Driving; Families of Victims Share Their Heartbreaking Stories; Push for Tougher Legislation

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR. April 15, 2024

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. is urging his colleagues to support legislation (S.3135) that will fix the drugged-driving loophole, while also raising awareness about the dangers of these incidents through a 2-part series of his podcast called “Where Do We Go From Here?”. In both segments, two families tragically impacted by drugged driving crashes share their stories.

In part one of Addabbo’s podcast, Henry Rivera Sr. and his wife Migdalia Rivera tell the story of their son, Henry Alexander Rivera, 18, and his friend Pedro Hernandez, 20, who were killed by a motorist high on cocaine. The assailant only received 8 years in prison for both fatalities. In part two of the podcast, Kristin Ruggles and her mother Kathleen Farrell speak about the crash that changed their family forever. Kathleen Farrell was severely injured, and her husband Dennis Farrell succumbed to injuries sustained during a head-on collision caused by an individual impaired by alcohol and Xanax. A common denominator in many drugged driving crashes, the Riveras and the Farrells included, involves repeat offenders.

The bill, S.3135/A.174 co-sponsored by Addabbo, fixes a critical drugged driving loophole in state law. Currently under New York State law, a drug-impaired driver cannot be arrested

and prosecuted without naming the specific drug used by the operator as one on the Public Health Law 3306 list. As a result, drug-impaired drivers refusing to name what substance they are using or agreeing to take an identifying test can avoid substance abuse screening, treatment, and drugged driving license repercussions. An arrest and prosecution is legally insufficient if the drug cannot be named no matter how impaired the driver is.

The same is true if the driver is using a substance or drug that is not on the list – like the constantly altered versions of K-2 and the growing use of "tranq" - which causes zombie-like effects. Regardless of how high a tranq-impaired driver is, an arrest is not allowed because xylazine is not on the Public Health Law list.

The fatalities and tragedies that occur with drugged driving know no boundaries,” Addabbo said. “This isn’t a political matter. It’s about doing the right thing for people and making our roads safer. It’s about passing Senate Bill 3135, to ensure that moving forward, the fatalities, the incidents that could have been avoided, are avoided. Too often, our government reacts to fatalities and tragedies when we have the power to prevent, and that is why we're here, to prevent, and save a life.”

Senator Addabbo’s podcast can be viewed on his YouTube channel at the links below.

Senator Addabbo's Drugged Driving Podcast (Part 1) with Henry & Migdalia Rivera

<https://youtu.be/SiskHRdUvxA>

Senator Addabbo's Drugged Driving Podcast (Part 2) with Kristen Ruggles & Kathleen Farrell

<https://youtu.be/E81w4MN98GM>