



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Announces New Good Samaritan Law

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. July 25, 2011

Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that Governor Andrew Cuomo recently signed legislation he supports to enact a new good samaritan law. The law will encourage people who witness an alcohol or drug related overdose to seek life-saving medical attention for the victim.

“No one should ever hesitate to call 911 when a person’s life is in jeopardy. However, we’ve seen cases where individuals, especially young people, did not try to get help for overdose victims out of fear of being prosecuted. This law changes that by giving people every incentive to seek life-saving help when someone needs it,” said Senator Fuschillo.

Under the law, those who seek medical attention for an alcohol or drug related overdose victim will not face the threat of prosecution for possession of alcohol or drugs. Fear of prosecution is a major reason why people do not seek medical care in overdose cases. The law applies to possession only; law enforcement will still be able to prosecute someone for dealing drugs.

According to the New York Academy of Medicine, studies have shown that an estimated 85% of overdose events occur in the company of others. However, an ambulance was called in only half those cases. Calling an ambulance was the first response to a peer’s overdose in only 14% of cases. The Academy also noted that as many as 32.6% of people reported that they would not seek help in an overdose case because they feared law enforcement involvement.

Such cases have occurred on Long Island, most notably the tragic death of eighteen year old Natalie Ciappa. Natalie, a senior at Plainedge High School, died of a heroin overdose at a friend’s house party in 2008. None of the other teenagers who were at the party called 911 to seek help.

The new law takes effect on September 18th.

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