



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

# **Kennedy, Ryan Host Roundtable Forum on Drug Addiction Treatment in Western New York**

Timothy M. Kennedy

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***Several leading treatment providers, advocates and researchers outline local issues related to addiction treatment and prevention. Forum discusses steps forward to improve patient care and adapt to the new challenges of prescription drug addiction***

BUFFALO – Senator Tim Kennedy and Assemblyman Sean Ryan hosted a roundtable discussion on the future of drug addiction treatment in Western New York Monday at D’Youville College. Several expert panelists participated in the conversation and detailed challenges facing treatment providers and prevention advocates.

In June, the Senate and Assembly passed legislation, known as I-STOP, to reform the prescription drug system in New York by creating a real-time electronic prescription drug database. Once implemented, this new system will help stem the tide of prescription drug addiction by preventing “doctor shopping” and prescription forgery and shutting down “pill-mills.”

“I-STOP is the right plan to prevent the skyrocketing numbers of crimes and deaths related to prescription drug abuse. Now, more must be done to combat addiction in Western New York,” said **Senator Kennedy**. “Untreated addiction leads to substantial problems for our community. Overdoses are at epidemic levels, drug-related crime is rampant and costs to the state keep rising. The need for treatment and prevention is growing – especially locally in Western New York – and the state must step up to meet the challenge. Assemblyman Ryan and I will continue working

with local advocates and providers, as well as our colleagues in government, to address this ongoing challenge.”

“While the passage of I-STOP will help to prevent prescription drug abuse throughout New York, there is still the problem of how best to accommodate all the New Yorkers out there who are seeking treatment for prescription drug addiction,” said **Assemblyman Ryan**. “I am thankful to everyone who was able to take part in today’s important discussion about how prescription drug abuse affects our community. Senator Kennedy and I will continue working together, focusing on the best solutions to improve addiction treatment services and address the challenging problem of drug addiction in Western New York.”

The forum focused on what must to be done to meet growing needs for addiction treatment and prevention in Western New York, especially considering the rise of prescription drug abuse. The discussion emphasized several priorities for drug addiction treatment, following the passage of I-STOP, including an absence of detox services for adolescents, more collaboration among stakeholders, investments in cost-effective treatments, proper disposal of prescription drugs and long waiting lists for residential services, among other topics.

The panel of experts outlined a substantial shortage of resources for treatment services throughout our region. Only 16 percent of local needs for intensive residential rehabilitation services are met, leaving 84 percent unmet need, according to the WNY Chemical Dependency Consortium. Western New York suffers from a significant funding disparity compared to downstate areas, the panel noted.

“We remain very concerned about regional inequities related to resource allocation for addiction treatment and prevention,” Kennedy added. “New Yorkers should have equal access to treatment services regardless of where they live.”

Experts who participated in the roundtable included:

- Dr. Gale Burstein, Commissioner, Erie County Department of Health
- Anne Constantino, President and CEO, Horizon Health Services
- Bill Burgin, Executive Director, Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services
- Andrea Wanat, Executive Director, Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Dr. Paul Updike, Chemical Dependency Medical Director, Sisters of Charity Hospital, Catholic Health

- Dr. Kenneth Leonard, Director, UB Research Institute on Addictions
- Dr. Paul Stasiewicz, Director of Clinical Research Center, UB Research Institute on Addictions
- Giselle Jackman, Director of Program Services, Prevention Focus
- Carolyn Grisko, Clinical Supervisor, Beacon Center
- Linda Flowers, director, WNY United Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Dennis Galluzzo, Executive Director, Pharmacists' Association of Western New York
- Avi Israel of Save the Michaels of the World

Several Western New York parents who advocated for the I-STOP legislation also attended the event.

Senator Kennedy and Assemblyman Ryan will be presenting concerns and findings from the roundtable forum to the state commissioner for the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*