



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie: Task Force Releases Recommendations for Treating Heroin Abuse

PATTY RITCHIE May 28, 2014

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### **Treatment, Prevention and Law Enforcement are Focus of New Report**

Better treatment, increasing prevention programs and stepping up law enforcement efforts are the focus of a report released today by members of the New York State Senate Join Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction; a bipartisan group tasked with examining the issues surrounding the increase in drug abuse in New York State.

The report, which includes a comprehensive package of bills that target treatment, prevention and law enforcement issues, was compiled following a series of more than a dozen forums held across the state—including one hosted by Senator Ritchie in Watertown—where experts, those in recovery, parents, law enforcement officials and other concerned citizens weighed in on how to best address the drug problem in New York State. A full copy of the report can be [viewed here](#).

“When it comes to heroin use, the statistics speak for themselves. With abuse of these drugs increasing across both our state and country, it’s clear that we need to take action now to stop the spread of these deadly substances,” said Senator Ritchie.

“The testimony we were able to gather from drug experts, past users, law enforcement officials, and family members of addicts was truly invaluable. It served as the basis for the recommendations released today, which will help to halt the heroin epidemic and prevent any future tragedies.”

Included in the report is a bill sponsored by Senator Ritchie (S.7662), that would help recovering abusers gain insurance coverage for their treatment. Increasing the availability and accessibility of treatment

options was one of the top recommendations identified at the Watertown forum which took place earlier this month.

In addition, a number of recommendations were submitted to the Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction following Senator Ritchie's Watertown forum including the following:

- Stepping up prevention efforts, including those that are school-based which teach students at an early age the dangers of drug abuse;
- Increased support for law enforcement efforts including targeting large scale drug dealers and shutting off the pipeline of drugs flowing from downstate to upstate;
- More stringent penalties which would raise the “cost of doing business” for heroin dealers—an idea widely supported by both law enforcement officials and recovering addicts;
- Increasing the availability of rehab treatments that are covered by insurance companies; and
- Expanding the availability of detox programs in underserved areas as well as areas with lengthy wait lists;

For more information, including testimony and video from Senator Ritchie's Heroin and Opioid Abuse Forum held last month in Watertown, [please click here](#).