



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Experts discuss Murphy plan to combat heroin crisis

Terrence P. Murphy

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VALHALLA, NY - As the epidemic of heroin and opiate abuse rages throughout the region, Senator Terrence P. Murphy brought together experts this week to evaluate his seven point plan to combat the scourge of heroin addiction. The event included local elected officials as well as experts from the fields of law enforcement, addiction, treatment and education and was held at Mount Pleasant Town Hall.

"We need to make it easier for someone seeking help to get into rehab," Murphy said. "We must make our penalties for traffickers much stricter and it's time to better fund drug prevention programs in schools by once and for all eliminating the Gap Elimination Adjustment with which continues to burden our most needy school districts for years."

The plan makes treatment more accessible, better equips first responders to save lives, and empowers law enforcement through increased funding. Senator Murphy's proposal also includes tougher sentences for convicted drug traffickers.

The specifics of the plan include:

1. Sponsoring legislation to require insurance companies to cover drug treatment and rehab up to ninety days;
2. Using drug seizure proceeds to provide funding for NARCAN, a potentially life-saving overdose treatment, to all first responders;
3. To help with prevention, state funding for school resource officers (Police SROs) and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) in all area schools by restoring the Gap Elimination Adjustment school aid cuts made by Senate Democrats in 2010;
4. Forming an federal-interstate-local joint, inter-agency law enforcement counter-narcotics proliferation task force and removing legal barriers to data sharing, aspects of which are already underway;
5. A state grant program for a local narcotics units to provide stepped up enforcement against drug distributors;
6. Increasing penalties for major narcotics traffickers; and
7. Restoring funding cuts enacted by Senate Democrats to the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to fund peer recovery advocate, addiction services and treatment programs.

County Legislator Michael Smith said, "No community is immune from the blight of heroin and prescription drug abuse. Senator Murphy's approach is the correct blend of treatment, prevention and enforcement needed to treat addiction for what it is: a disease. I thank him for his leadership on this issue at the state level."

Steve Salomone, who lost his son Justin to heroin, is one of the founders of Drug Crisis in Our Backyard, a nonprofit organization that helps families deal with addiction. "Addiction is not a bad choice, it's an illness. Senator Murphy's plan can help families recognize signs before people start using and if they do, get them the help they need," he said.

Dr. Susan Guiney, superintendent of the Mt Pleasant School District said, "Senator Murphy's plan to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment and use that funding to

support the social and emotional well-being of children in our schools including extracurricular and academic activities to engage children is a sound investment in our children's future. Part of educating our children is teaching them about healthy lifestyles and the risks of narcotic and habit forming substances such as the abuse of pain-killers and prescription drugs that can be a gateway into a world of dangerous and addictive narcotics like heroin."

"I'm a father and a health professional," Murphy said. "Seeing so many young people die in such a senseless way has been eating at my heart for a long time. Now as Senator I have an opportunity to lead by stepping up and making a difference for the families of the Hudson Valley, and this Seven Point Plan does just that."

As a town councilman, Murphy previously served as an appointee on the Senate Task Force on Opioid and Heroin Addiction. The Mount Pleasant event is the first in a series of forums over the coming months which will take place throughout Murphy's district.