



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

ADDRESSING HEROIN

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Since early April, the Senate Task Force on Heroin has been holding public hearings in every region of the state in response to the alarming rise of heroin abuse being reported from every corner of New York.

A total of 14 hearings have been scheduled, including one that I'll be sponsoring in Elmira on Friday, May 16, 2014.

At these hearings, we're hearing testimony from regional law enforcement officers, drug addiction counselors, treatment providers, social services and mental health professionals, and other experts about the range of complex challenges posed by heroin including addiction prevention and treatment options, drug-related crimes, and other community and public safety impacts.

We can't ignore the alarming threat of heroin, meth and other illegal drugs spreading throughout our communities. The risks are too great for these epidemics to spiral out of control and overwhelm individual lives along with our local systems of health care, law enforcement, criminal justice and social services.

So I look forward to bringing the members of the task force to Elmira to hear directly from those on the front lines locally who can help us zero in on the heroin epidemic. We'll be working to determine the most effective combination of law enforcement, awareness and education, and treatment and prevention to try to stop the spread of heroin, better protect our communities and save lives, especially young lives.

According to figures from Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services, the numbers of 19-to-25 year olds in the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes treated for drug abuse increased more than 35 percent from 2007 to 2012. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has estimated that approximately 23 percent of those who use heroin become dependent on the highly addictive drug.

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