



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Marc Panepinto

Senators Panepinto And Kennedy Enlist Senate Democratic Leader Stewart-Cousins To Aid Western New York Fight Against Heroin And Opioid Crisis

MARC PANEPINTO September 19, 2015

| ISSUE: **HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION**



Initiatives Would Increase Penalties for the Sale of Opioids; Better Inform the Public about Addiction Risks and Provide Local Rehabilitation Services

(BUFFALO, NY) Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins today joined Western New York Senators Tim Kennedy and Marc Panepinto in Buffalo to call for more state funding for Western New York efforts to combat the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic. The

Senators also unveiled a major legislative package to confront the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic impacting communities throughout New York State. The Senate Democratic initiatives will increase penalties for selling heroin and opioids that result in fatalities, inform the public about the danger of these addictive substances and provide greater assistance for community-based rehabilitation programs.

“Heroin and opioid abuse, particularly among young adults, has risen to alarming levels in communities throughout New York State,” **Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “This issue impacts families and communities across New York, and it requires immediate action by statewide leaders. The Senate Democrats have led the statewide fight to combat this crisis, but more action is needed to protect our communities and end this opioid abuse epidemic.”

Senator Marc Panepinto said, “Heroin and opioid-related overdoses impact more than the users themselves. With 119 opioid-related deaths last year alone, the ripple effects of this deadly issue are much more far-reaching; impacting the children, families and communities they are a part of. It is imperative that we confront it head-on and on every level. From educational campaigns to stricter deterrents for distributors, I am proud to support this all-encompassing legislative package and look forward to the day we can put an end to this epidemic once and for all.”

Senator Tim Kennedy said, “As we recognize September as National Recovery Month, we’re showing the Leader firsthand the faces of addiction in Western New York, and the stories of the addiction specialists who want so badly to help them, but desperately need New York State’s help. We’re grateful that the Leader continues to stand with us as we fight to ensure that anyone struggling to overcome addiction has the options available to do so, and we remain committed to combating this heroin and opioid crisis as one.”

Anne Constantino, President & CEO of Horizon, said, “Horizon is thankful for the support of our Senate leaders here today discussing the heroin epidemic facing our community. Unfortunately now, the majority of people who come in for treatment are addicted to opiate drugs, including heroin. The problem is a community-wide problem and it does not discriminate by any means. Horizon is focused on providing comprehensive, high quality behavioral services to those looking to achieve personal recovery. The services provided at Horizon Village Terrace House are vital in Western New York and we at Horizon are committed to continued quality of care and serving those in need in our community.”

The legislation unveiled by Senate Democratic Leader Stewart-Cousins and Western New York Senators Kennedy and Panepinto will build on past efforts to confront the opioid abuse epidemic by preventing addiction for teens and young people, and promoting additional treatment options for those who have already become addicted to these dangerous substances. These efforts include Senate Democratic leadership in securing that first responders carry the anti-overdose drug, naloxone, which can help save those suffering from an opioid overdose. The Senate Democrats were also instrumental in ensuring that health insurance companies are required to cover opioid abuse treatment programs for extended periods of time and provide coverage for opioid-addiction treatment medications.

At Horizon Village's inpatient care facility, 70 percent of those admitted are diagnosed with opioid addiction, which equates to roughly 3,200 patients annually. That number only continues to grow as heroin addiction and abuse persists, furthering emphasizing the need for additional treatment accommodations. The drug crisis extends across New York State and nationwide. Since 2009, there has been a 17.8% increase in the number of people admitted into New York State-certified treatment programs for heroin and opioid abuse, with just over 118,000 admissions statewide in 2014. People between the ages of 18 and 34 saw the largest increase in admissions over that five year period. Leader Stewart-Cousins and

Senators Kennedy and Panepinto toured Horizon Village's Terrace House Residential Treatment Center, a 40-bed residential treatment facility located in the city of Buffalo, to discuss potential solutions to the crises with the local provider and highlight the need for additional resources.

Just last month, US Attorney William Hochul announced one of the biggest drug busts involving heroin in the nation's history, with over \$3.5 million in drugs seized and taken off Western New York streets. Hochul, local law enforcement and the Drug Enforcement Agency have repeatedly warned of the growing heroin crisis, likening it to the crack cocaine epidemic in the late 1980s.

STIFFER PENALTIES

Legislation has been introduced to increase the penalty for selling an opioid that results in death to manslaughter in the first degree. This bill is named Laree's Law, after Laree Farrell-Lincoln who passed away in March 2013 due to a heroin overdose. With the alarming increase in adolescent users, deaths, and easy accessibility, it is essential for New York to strengthen laws against sellers and distributors who peddle these deadly drugs into the general population.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EDUCATION

The drastic increase in teen heroin use has heightened the need for public heroin abuse education. To address this issue legislation has been sponsored to provide \$500,000 for production of public service announcements and a social media campaign that will highlight the dangerous consequences of heroin and opioid abuse.

As many drug users develop their addiction from legally obtained prescription drugs, legislation has been introduced to ensure addictive medications disclose the risks of

addiction. This legislation is called the Michael David Israel Patient Information Act, after Michael David Israel who battled with prescription drug abuse and tragically took his own life on June 4, 2011.

COMMUNITY BASED ASSISTANCE SERVICES

To meet the increasing demand for heroin dependency and related health services at the community level, there is a bill to establish the Community Opioid Rehabilitation Programmatic Services Act. This initiative will create an Opioid Dependency Services Fund that will receive funds through the annual savings of downsizing of correctional facilities and invest those resources in community based opioid abuse rehabilitation services.

To reduce the costs of rehabilitation efforts and simultaneously increase success rates, legislation has been sponsored to enable New Yorkers in expensive, inpatient detoxification facilities to utilize community-based programs. Currently, many of those in hospital-based programs do not need such high level care and could be better served in less intensive, and less expensive, community-based detoxification programs. This legislation will utilize the cost savings from patients transitioning to less expensive programs to reinvest and create more community based detox and rehabilitation facilities.

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