



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: Senate budget will include \$167 million to address heroin and opioid abuse and addiction

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Albany, N.Y., March 14—State Senator Tom O'Mara said today that the Senate's 2016-17 budget proposal, scheduled to be acted on this week and possibly as early as today, will include a total of \$167 million to continue to enhance the state's heroin and opioid addiction prevention, treatment, recovery, and education services.

Additionally, the Senate budget proposal will include legislation to prevent the abuse of opioid prescription drugs.

O'Mara, a member of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, said that the Senate Republican Majority budget priorities reflect input he and his colleagues have received at numerous local public forums they've conducted since 2014, [including one recently in Penn Yan \(Yates County\)](#).

Read more on the Feb. 23rd task force forum in Penn Yan from The Chronicle-Express, ["The front line in the opiate crisis in strained"](#)

"It's important to hear directly from those on the front lines locally who can help us target the necessary responses, and I was grateful for their participation in Yates County recently. The local input we've been receiving will help our task force continue to build on and strengthen the state-local partnership that's going to be critical to putting in place the most up to date and effective combination of law enforcement, awareness and education, and treatment and prevention," said O'Mara.

Task Force co-chair, Senator Terrence Murphy (R-C-I, Yorktown) said, “After a series of task force hearings spanning from Yates County to Brooklyn it has been made abundantly clear that this epidemic has no boundaries. Tackling the growing heroin and opioid crisis begins with properly funding prevention treatment and enforcement initiatives. No amount is too small when it comes to saving lives.”

Members of the task force have been hearing testimony from regional law enforcement officers, first responders and district attorneys, drug addiction counselors and treatment providers, recovering addicts and family members, social services and health professionals, educators 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 health and safety impacts.

This week the Senate and Assembly are scheduled to approve what are commonly called “Budget Resolutions.” The resolutions represent public priority statements on what each house of the Legislature intends to take into final negotiations on the 2016-17 state budget. For the sixth consecutive year, lawmakers and the governor hope to have this year’s final state budget enacted before the April 1 start of the state’s new fiscal year.

For heroin and opioid prevention and treatment services, the Senate is proposing to increase Governor Cuomo’s proposal of \$141 million by \$26 million, or more than 18 percent, to a total of \$167 million in order to include an additional:

- > \$10 million for transitional housing, including inpatient treatment, for individuals in recovery, with 25 percent of these funds to be used for individuals ages 15-24;

- > \$6.5 million for additional recovery services;

- > \$3.85 million for 11 additional “Recovery Community Centers.” The governor proposed to expand the number of Recovery Community Centers in the state from six to nine. The Senate proposal would bring the total to 20 and would require that all centers be distributed on a geographically even basis;

- > \$2 million for school prevention efforts; and

- > \$1 million for 10 additional “Family Support Navigators,” who assist New Yorkers and their families with navigating insurance and treatment systems. Cuomo’s

proposed budget provides for 10 Navigators to be regionally distributed statewide. O'Mara said the Senate plan doubles that commitment to 20 and helps to ensure that the services are distributed on a geographically even basis.

The Senate is also proposing the inclusion of legislation in the 2016-17 budget that helps prevent the abuse of opioid prescription drugs by ensuring that FDA-approved abuse-deterrent drugs are dispensed whenever prescribed and are not interchanged or substituted for an opioid prescription drug lacking abuse-deterrent technology. The legislation also requires insurance plans to cover abuse-deterrent opioid prescription drugs at the same level as non-abuse deterrent opioid prescription drugs, prevents insurance plans from requiring a patient take a non-abuse deterrent opioid drug before a drug containing abuse-deterrent technology, and ensures that prior authorization requirements are applied equally to both abuse-deterrent and non-abuse-deterrent opioid prescription drugs.

O'Mara said that this year funding recommendation is the latest in a range of Senate Republican Majority legislative efforts over the past several years to try to stay ahead of the opioid and heroin crisis – first concentrating on the abuse of prescription painkillers, and then following the opioid addiction trend as it turned to heroin. Deaths from heroin overdoses across the nation escalated 175 percent between 2010 and 2014, and the numbers continue to climb.

Since 2014, the Senate's Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction has held upwards of 25 forums soliciting input from stakeholders and experts, and have used the information collected to develop recommendations for legislative action. Significant legislation has already been enacted as a result of the Task Force's efforts and more continues to be developed to address the ongoing crisis. Forums have already been held earlier this year in Oneonta, Penn Yan, and Brooklyn, and another forum is scheduled for April 7, 2016, in Oakdale in Suffolk County.

For more information about the ongoing work of the Senate's Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, go to:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/committees/heroin-task-force> .