



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction Releases Comprehensive Report and Recommendations

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| ISSUE: **COMBAT HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, SENATE TASK FORCE ON HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION**



The New York State Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction today issued a **new and comprehensive report** describing steps currently being taken to address the state's opioid crisis and the ways New York can continue to lead. The report released by Task Force Co-Chairs Senator Chris Jacobs, Senator George Amedore, and Senator Fred Akshar includes a series of 11 detailed recommendations to help build upon the progress being made to save

lives and rebuild families.

Senator Jacobs said, “I want to thank the hundreds of stakeholders who provided our Task Force with an incredible amount of information and shared with us their critically important firsthand experiences at hearings and forums all across our state. Because of them we are able to produce this report. Even in the face of the progress we have made to date, this report reaffirms that our fight against this public health crisis is far from over. I hope that all my Senate colleagues, as well as the members of the Assembly and the Governor will get behind our efforts to implement these recommendations.”

Senator Amedore said, “After holding a series of forums around the state to identify where gaps remain in the system, these recommendations lay out the next steps to continue to address the heroin and opioid epidemic that is devastating our communities. I want to thank all the stakeholders that participated in the Task Force forums for their input and expertise, and I look forward to furthering our efforts here in New York to help those that are struggling with addiction by ensuring proper prevention, treatment, recovery services, and enforcement.”

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Senator Akshar said, “Today’s report is about New York getting real, tangible results in our fight against the heroin and opioid epidemic. We’ve made incredible progress over the past two years, but it was only made possible through traveling the state and meeting with advocates and families who’ve worked tirelessly for years at the ground level to reduce stigma and bring much-needed treatment services and resources to their communities. Anyone who suggests we should rest on our laurels is sadly mistaken. Our work is far from over, but if we continue to put personal and political differences aside, we will continue to take our communities and our state back from the scourge of addiction.”

Since the Senate Majority formed its Task Force in 2014, significant resources have been committed to examining the multi-faceted causes and effects of the heroin and opioid crisis and

working to find innovative solutions. There has been extensive stakeholder outreach through dozens of hearings and forums, with nine held (Buffalo, Cortland, Binghamton, Johnstown, Albany, Hudson, Newburgh, Pleasantville, and Mineola) in the last two years alone. State funding has also nearly doubled to a record \$247 million in this year's budget.

The report details the Task Force's continuation of a four-pronged approach – focusing on prevention, treatment, recovery, and enforcement – in developing legislative and budgetary recommendations following extensive collaboration with stakeholders at the forums and hearings. Among the many new state laws highlighted in the Task Force report and passed this session is a measure taking effect this week to prohibit “patient brokering” that aggressively targets people in need of substance use disorder treatment in exchange for a fee. Legislation spearheaded by the Task Force has also served as a national model for other states and in the creation of the federal Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act recently passed by Congress.

While some statistics may indicate a slowing of the meteoric rise of opioid deaths – potentially due to many of the steps New York has already taken to reduce opioid abuse – the Task Force is committed to doing more to prevent additional loss of life. The report's 11 recommendations form a comprehensive plan to utilize public and private resources to help underserved populations and others without access to treatment, as well as improve the support systems already in place to combat the state's evolving fight against opioid abuse.

They include:

- Increase resources to support the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals trained to treat substance use disorder;
- Upgrade the I-STOP Prescription Monitoring Program to improve interstate monitoring of potential over-prescribing of opioids;
- Maximize federal funding to help support more children at the state's newly-established Infant Recovery Centers;
- Reduce the cost of naloxone to ensure greater access to this life-saving overdose-reversal medication and enhance public education and outreach on naloxone use and expiration to ensure effective treatment;
- Explore the further limitation of initial opioid prescriptions for acute pain to three days from the current seven days, with certain medical exceptions;
- Require enhanced treatment plans for patients after the first month of opioid use, instead of waiting until the current 90-day standard;
- Further address addiction in rural parts of the state by improving access to treatment, such as establishing Centers for Excellence on Substance Use Disorder;
- Authorize hospital-community-healthcare-SUD treatment professional collaboration programs to facilitate innovation in meeting community health care needs;
- Improve the use and collection of data to better identify, investigate, and prosecute high-volume opioid prescribers;
- Enhance and create appropriate criminal penalties for drug dealers who sell substances that result in death; and
- Expand health insurance coverage options for medical marijuana as a method to reduce overall usage of opioid medications.

To view the full report which includes more information on the recommendations and details about the numerous state legislative victories spearheaded by the Task Force, go to https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/article/attachment/nys_senate_heroin_and_opioic_recommendations_2018.pdf.

In addition, footage of the forums, and other related Senate Task Force materials can be found at <https://www.nysenate.gov/committees/heroin-task-force>.