



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Republicans: Democrats Missed Opportunity To Dedicate Opioid Settlement Funds to Treatment and Recovery Services

ROBERT G. ORTT April 26, 2021

| ISSUE: **COMBAT HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION**



Senate Republican Leader Ortt, along with Senators Peter Oberacker, Fred Akshar and Phil Boyle, today echoed the calls of advocates throughout the state to ensure that any future opioid settlement funds be put into a “lockbox” dedicated to improve and expand treatment and recovery services for New Yorkers struggling with addiction.

The call follows passage of a state budget, negotiated between Governor Cuomo and

legislative Democrats, that funneled opioid settlement funds into the general fund instead of creating a dedicated “lockbox” that could be used to enhance and increase investment in much needed prevention, treatment, and recovery services for New Yorkers who are struggling with addiction.

Earlier this year, New York State Attorney General Letitia James, along with a coalition of AGs from 47 states, announced a \$573 million settlement agreement with McKinsey & Company for their role in the ongoing opioid epidemic. New York State will receive more than \$32 million from the agreement.

Upon the announcement of the award, advocates and lawmakers urged the money – and all future opioid settlement funds – be put in a “lockbox” for the sole purpose of expanding and improving prevention, treatment, recovery and support services for those struggling with addiction or in recovery. Senate Democrats hailed a proposal they included in their one-house proposal to do so – but instead, voted in favor of the enacted budget that failed to create a dedicated “lockbox” for the settlement funds.

In a letter to Governor Cuomo, the Senators expressed frustration at the final budget language that gives the Executive broad authority on how to disperse the funds, and called on him to ensure that the entire amount is used toward enhancing treatment and recovery services throughout the state.

“Senate Democrats are talking out of both sides of their mouths – they said one thing in their one house, but did another when they voted in favor of the final budget that funneled a majority of the opioid settlement funds into the general fund. Yet, now they claim ‘No administration should have the ability to use opioid settlement to supplant state aid rather than to supplement the effort.’ They voted for this budget that did exactly that, so their calls now for a dedicated lockbox are disingenuous at best – talk about too little too late,” said

Leader Ortt.

“The opioid epidemic has devastated families, communities, and our entire state. The isolation many have been dealing with over the past year has further compounded the issue and left even more individuals in need. It is unconscionable that funds meant for opioid prevention, education, and treatment could be siphoned away to pay for unrelated pet projects. New York State must ensure that opioid settlement funds are restricted and used for their intended purpose – saving lives,” said Senator Oberacker, ranking member on the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse.

“It is incumbent upon the Governor to ensure that every dollar of the McKinsey settlement actually gets into the hands of community based providers who provide life-saving addiction treatment services. Addiction is an insidious disease that is claiming too many lives in every single corner of this great state and impacts New Yorkers of every race and income level. Any less than every penny of the \$32 million settlement going to addiction services is a failing of the state's moral obligation to invest in and protect some of the most vulnerable among us,” said Senator Akshar, former co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction.

“Funds awarded to New York State from cases against opioid manufacturers must be dedicated to treatment and recovery services for those suffering from addiction. Every dime of them,” said Senator Boyle, former co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction.

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