

October 3, 2019

Good Afternoon,

Thank you Senator Harckham, Senator Carlucci, and Senator Rivera, for giving us all the opportunity to present before you today. The New York State Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction and Overdose Prevention hearing today has given us the opportunity to share with you all some concerns.

As the only Methadone IP and OP treatment provider in Putnam County, Arms Acres is intricately involved in fighting this opioid addiction. Years ago, a person experiencing an opioid addiction was not allowed to be admitted in our IP Detox or Rehab Program. Due to Legislation passed following Governor Cuomo's Heroin Task Force tour, treatment on all levels has been made possible for all people experiencing this addiction. This treatment is no longer thwarted by Managed Care Companies at the door as pre-authorizations are no longer required for Detoxification, Rehabilitation or Medication Supported Treatment.

Over the past few years, various prevention treatment and recovery options have also been made available due to initiatives created by Governor Cuomo, Lt. Governor Hochul and Commissioner Gonzalez-Sanchez. These initiatives have included Recovery Schools, Club Houses, OTPs, additional Detox and Rehabilitation Beds and an increase in Residential Treatment Beds. Cutbacks to prevention programs in the past have ultimately had an impact on today's treatment. The adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is evident by the costs spent today on treatment services. It is incumbent upon those in leadership to ensure that **the full spectrum of treatment** is supported to surround this epidemic.

As a member of the Governor's Heroin Task Force and his Behavioral Health Services Advisory Council, I have seen the impact of this addiction in all communities across our state. As I have visited other States, I have also seen how this addiction has impacted our Country. We in NY are in a unique position because we have recognized this impact and have begun to educate our communities and establish programs, which will provide additional services for individuals and their families suffering from addiction.

Due to the stigma associated with Medication Assisted Treatment such as Methadone and Suboxone, many communities look askance at outpatient programs that offer this level of treatment. Yet, people in their backyards are dying. Grassroots programs like, Drug Crisis in our Backyard, Families in Support of Treatment and Hope not Handcuffs, just to name a few, are making inroads to assist individuals and their families across the state. We must provide additional assistance to such programs that are able to infiltrate communities with information and education so they understand how to deal with the opioid addiction.

We need resources to help encourage and support that education process with the outcome of eliminating the stigma. MAT is treatment to many opioid addicts like insulin is to the diabetic. Those receiving such treatment should be celebrated for their courage to fight. Resources can come from the settlement in the Opioid Manufacturers lawsuits. Those dollars should be reinvested in Opioid treatment services and Narcan replenishment in high risk communities.

To reduce additional overdoses and deaths we need to ensure that Narcan education and kits are available in schools, churches, community centers to go along with the police, hospitals and fire departments. To

assume this addiction is not occurring in the above mentioned areas is one of the reasons it is spreading. We must fight back from within our communities.

To eliminate barriers to care for those suffering from this addiction we must also eliminate burdensome copays for OP treatment services due to the frequency of care. To eliminate barriers of care for providers we must ensure that retrospective reviews and retroactive take backs are monitored so Managed Care Companies are not controlling services provided but are becoming partners in the treatment process.

Those individuals who use drugs need to have a myriad of services available to them. From OP Clinical Services to IOP, to OTP to Inpatient Detox, Rehab and Residential services. There also needs to be Recovery and Self Help Programs that understand the importance of MAT. There is a big push for treatment providers to recognize the value of harm reduction as a vehicle towards abstinence. In the past abstinence-only programs would discharge people for using the same substance they were trying to fight for years. Today, programs and the regulatory bodies are understanding that the goal is the same but how to achieve it may vary. Treatment options should not be cookie cutter but specific to the individual and eclectic in nature. Lastly, the best way for treatment to be effective is in the collaboration of programs to meet the continuum of care for the individuals and their families.

That is why in Putnam County the presence of NCADD, St Christopher's Inn, Cove Care, Search for Change, Drug Crisis and Hope Not Handcuffs along with Arms and Putnam Hospital have collaborated with Programs in Dutchess, Orange and Westchester Counties to present a formidable attack against the addiction.

Hope Not Handcuffs is one of those Programs that is working collaboratively with Law Enforcement and Treatment Providers to assist in diverting people from jail into treatment. We need more of these Programs throughout the SJoate that would educate law enforcement and engage them in the treatment process.

Additional services that provide more peer supports in local hospitals would also be another way to impact this epidemic.

Together we ALL can make a difference.