



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Lanza, Cusick & A.g. Schneiderman Detail I-Stop Plan to Address Rx Drug Crisis Plaguing Staten Island

ANDREW J LANZA March 8, 2012

Law Enforcement, Elected Officials & Medical Professionals Join Forces In Support Of L.anza's Online, Real Time Database To Track Prescription Narcotics

“I-STOP” Legislation Would Crack Down On Abuses Like ‘Doc-Shopping’ And Rx Forgeries

Fatalities On Staten Island Linked To Accidental Overdoses Of Prescription Drugs Up 147 Percent Since 2005

STATEN ISLAND — Amid Staten Island’s growing prescription drug epidemic, a coalition of law enforcement, elected officials and medical professionals joined forces today to urge the passage of Senator Lanza's Internet System for Tracking Overprescribing (I-STOP) plan for an online database that enables doctors and pharmacists to report and track certain controlled narcotics in real time. Today’s endorsement of I-STOP, announced at a press conference at Delco Drugs in Eltingville, follows the release of a recent report by the Attorney General detailing the growing prescription drug abuse crisis in every corner of New York State. Statewide, the number of prescriptions for all narcotic painkillers has increased

by six million, from 16.6 million in 2007 to nearly 22.5 million in 2010.

Senator Andrew J. Lanza said, “We need legislation that allows our physicians and pharmacists to access real-time prescription histories to ensure that patients' prescription use is legitimate - not lethal. Now is not the time for cosmetic tweaks to the state's outdated monitoring system, we need a modern database that is updated in real time so that no addict or criminal slips through undetected. I am proud to sponsor legislation with the Attorney General to give medical professionals the tools they need to improve health care service, stop prescription drug abuse, and most importantly, save lives.”

“The prescription drug crisis on Staten Island has reached epidemic proportions, and it's time to take action before another tragedy strikes. The law enforcement community, medical professionals and elected officials on the ground – who see the devastation of this crisis firsthand – stand united to protect our communities by supporting I-STOP,” said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. “The time is now to enact a real time system to streamline communication between health care providers and pharmacists to better serve patients, stop prescription drug trafficking, and provide treatment to those who need help. Inaction is not an option.”

Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D-Staten Island) said, “The information gap between doctors and pharmacists allows addicts and abusers to slip through our regulatory cracks. Only a real time system like I-STOP will fix it. To best protect the public, medical professionals must be able to update records of controlled substance prescriptions when they are written or filled. This legislation is the best solution to ensure patients receive the medication they

need, and those who profit off of abuse receive the justice they deserve.”The I-STOP bill was introduced in the State Assembly by Democrat Michael Cusick, and in the Senate by Republican Andrew J. Lanza, both of Staten Island.

Prescription drug abuse is the country’s second most prevalent illegal drug problem, and recent reports and studies have documented corresponding data in the state of New York. According to the Attorney General’s recent report, the prescription drug crisis is particularly acute on Staten Island where painkiller prescriptions, overdoses, and drug treatment admissions have increased at an alarming rate.

For example:

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- Fatalities on Staten Island linked to accidental overdoses of prescription drugs increased by 147 percent from 3 per 100,000 in 2005 to 7.4 per 100,000 in 2009 – more than double the rate of any other borough;
- Of the five New York City neighborhoods with the highest per capita rates of prescriptions filled for narcotic painkillers, four of the top five were on Staten Island;
- In New York City, the rate of prescription pain medication misuse among those age 12 or older increased by 40 percent from 2002 to 2009, with nearly 900,000 oxycodone prescriptions and more than 825,000 hydrocodone prescriptions filled in 2009; and
- Statewide, prescriptions for hydrocodone have increased 16.7 percent, while those for oxycodone have increased an astonishing 82 percent.

Staten Island District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan Jr. (R-Richmond County) said, “We need new tools to meet the unique challenges we face in combating the growing prescription drug abuse crisis – such as a database that tracks the disbursement of prescription narcotics in real-time. I applaud A.G. Schneiderman’s efforts to provide this effective tool for law enforcement and the medical community in this state.”

Staten Island Borough President James P. Molinaro said, “Staten Island has seen far too many tragedies and we are fighting a society where drug use is being glamorized. I am pleased to join my colleagues to find ways to safeguard our citizens from the dangers of prescription drugs. I support Attorney General Schneiderman’s I-STOP plan, as it is needed to help curb the crisis of prescription drug abuse.”

Dr. David Kim of Beacon Christian Community Health Center, said, “Prescription drug abuse is a growing crisis on Staten Island and across the state. It's clear that it's time to overhaul the current prescription drug monitoring system and Attorney General Schneiderman's I-STOP plan is a critical first step for doctors, pharmacists and patients. I'd also like to thank Assemblyman Cusick and State Senator Lanza locally for carrying this bill in the Assembly and Senate. All stakeholders must come together and work constructively to address this epidemic now before more meaningful lives are wasted, and even lost.”

Pharmacist Robert Annicharico, Owner of Delco Drugs, said, “Prescription drug abuse has reached crisis levels on Staten Island, and pharmacists are on the front lines. Attorney General Schneiderman’s I-STOP proposal will give us the tools we need to identify forged or stolen prescriptions, and spot other abuses like doctor shopping. Real time information about controlled substance prescriptions will help us be part of the solution to this problem, and keep our entire community safer.”

Today's announcement comes in the wake of endorsements for the Attorney General's I-STOP bill from U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, as well as a bipartisan coalition of 24 U.S. Representatives from across New York State, 20 addiction treatment provider organizations, the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York, New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, New York State Association of PBA's, and the Police Benevolent Association of the New York State Troopers, Inc. Bipartisan support in the state Legislature for I-STOP is growing as well, with 37 Senate and 50 Assembly sponsors signed on to the bill, including Senator Diane Savino and Assemblymembers Nicole Malliotakis, Matthew Titone and Lou Tobacco.

Several weeks ago, Attorney General Schneiderman launched a new website, "Share Your I-STOP Story," that showcases personal stories from New Yorkers who have been impacted by the growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse. As momentum builds for legislative action, the site urges doctors, pharmacists, addiction sufferers and their family members to put a human face on the problem, and help persuade state lawmakers to pass I-STOP.

I-STOP will vastly enhance the effectiveness of the present system. Its goal is to enable doctors and pharmacists to provide prescription pain medications, and other controlled substances, to patients who truly need them. At the same time, it will arm them with the necessary data in real time to detect potentially dangerous drug interactions, identify patterns of abuse by patients, doctors and pharmacists, help those who suffer from crippling addictions and prevent potential addiction before it starts. Prescription drug monitoring programs operate in 43 states.

A copy of the Attorney General's report on prescription drug abuse is available online at:
www.ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/press-releases/2012/ISTOP%20REPORT%20FINAL%201.10.12.pdf

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