



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy, Avi Israel Praise Deal Struck on Prescription Drug Tracking System

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY June 8, 2012

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ALBANY, N.Y. – Last fall, Senator Tim Kennedy and Avi Israel joined forces to announce a new legislative package that they called the Michael David Israel Laws. The bills – which outlined a comprehensive approach to addressing the epidemic of prescription drug abuse –

were named for Mr. Israel's son, Michael, who took his own life after battling addiction to painkillers.

A year after Michael Israel's death and months after the push began for the Michael David Israel Laws and Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing (I-STOP), a deal has been struck to reform the system. Many of the concepts originally proposed in the Michael David Israel Laws – such as drug-tracking reform, physician training, patient information and electronic prescriptions – will be included in the negotiated bill. The Legislature is expected to vote on it in the coming days.

Senator Kennedy and Mr. Israel praised the progress and stressed the urgency of bringing the bill to a vote quickly – one person dies every 19 minutes as a result of prescription drug abuse nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

“This is a major victory for the families of this state who understand first-hand the devastation of prescription drug abuse,” said Senator Kennedy, an early cosponsor of I-STOP. “We partnered with one such family – the Israel family – when our work on this issue began, but in the months we’ve been fighting for action, we’ve met so many mothers and fathers who have lost children to this health crisis. These grieving parents, who bravely told the stories of their loved ones, have driven this cause forward. The stories of struggling with addiction and the tragedies that resulted – that is what made Albany finally move on prescription drug abuse reform.

“We owe Attorney General Schneiderman a great deal of credit for taking action to address this growing crisis that is hitting our communities hard. This comprehensive legislation is the right solution to curb the skyrocketing number of overdoses, suicides, robberies and murders connected to prescription drugs in recent years,” Kennedy added. “I urge my colleagues to join me in pushing for swift passage of this legislation. We must act now before

more lives are lost.”

“It has been a struggle ever since we lost Michael, one year ago yesterday. He was an extremely outgoing, bright kid, who excelled in school and who was a pleasure to be around,” said Avi Israel. “Michael’s death was the result of a system that failed him. Since then, we’ve been fighting to fix it. We started a group called ‘Save the Michaels of the World,’ so that we could help save the lives of those struggling with addiction. We had great partners in state government who stood by our side every step of the way. Attorney General Schneiderman led the charge for reform with his I-STOP legislation. As the lead sponsor of the Michael David Israel Laws, Senator Kennedy has been working hard for us since day one. The entire WNY Delegation came together and joined us in this fight.

“I want to thank Governor Cuomo, Senator Skelos and Speaker Silver for reaching a deal that will establish the real-time prescription drug tracking system that we need to save lives,” Israel added. “Now that a final compromise has been reached, there is no reason to delay a vote on the bill. I hope the Senate and Assembly will act quickly and get the bill to the Governor for his signature.”

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate’s 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.