Senator Lanza & Assemblyman Cusick Announce Passage of Landmark Prescription Drug Reform Package

ANDREW J LANZA   June 12, 2012

Online, Real Time Database To Track Prescription Narcotics Will Make New York State A National Leader In Fighting Prescription Drug Abuse

In response to the escalating problem of prescription drug abuse on Staten Island and across New York, the state Senate and Assembly passed legislation yesterday that would make significant changes to the way prescription drugs are distributed and monitored in New York State.

The bill, (A.10623/S.7637), sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-I, Staten Island), and Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D-Staten Island), creates a "real time" prescription drug tracking system to provide doctors and pharmacists with the information they need to prevent prescription drug abuse, overdoses and deaths.

"Passage of this bill today puts us one step closer to reversing the numbers of deaths caused by the prescription drug abuse epidemic, which has destroyed families and lives from one end of the state to the other," Senator Lanza said. "This law will allow doctors and pharmacists to have the information they need to ensure that dangerous prescription drugs are kept out of the wrong hands. I thank my friend and colleague Assemblyman Michael Cusick, the Governor, Attorney General Schneiderman, Senator Skelos, Speaker Silver and Senator Hannon for working so long and so hard on this cooperative effort. I also want to thank the Staten Island Advance and the many advocates who helped raise awareness of this terrible problem."   "I truly believe that this law will spare families across Staten Island from the devastation our neighbors have suffered from prescription pill abuse and addiction.", Senator Lanza concluded.

"I want to thank my partner and friend Senator Andy Lanza, Governor Cuomo, Attorney General Schneiderman, Speaker Silver, and all of my colleagues who worked together to craft this comprehensive prescription drug reform bill," said Assemblyman Cusick. "The district that I represent has one of the highest rates of prescription drug abuse in New York State, and that sobering fact was the impetus of my push for meaningful reform. This legislation not only serves as a deterrent to doctor-shopping and drug abuse, but also seeks to assist those who may be suffering from addiction. The result of this team-effort is a bill that provides appropriate controls to restrict access of abusers and ensure those who profit from the abuse face consequences."

The provisions of the legislation include:

· Creating a modernized and improved "real time" Prescription Monitoring Program (I-STOP) that practitioners and pharmacists can securely and easily access, allowing them to view their patients' controlled substance histories;

· Requiring e-prescribing, making New York a national leader by being one of the first states to move from paper prescriptions to a system mandating electronic prescribing;

· Updating controlled substance schedules to align New York's Controlled Substances Act with Federal Law and changing the schedules for hydrocodone compounds and tramadol to reduce abuse;

· Enhancing the Prescription Pain Medication Awareness Program to educate the public and health care practitioners about the risks associated with prescribing and taking controlled substance pain medications; and

· Establishing a Safe Disposal Program to increase the options available to safely dispose of unused controlled substances and prevent people who abuse prescription painkillers from obtaining them from friends or relatives.

The abuse of prescription medicine has become the nation's fastest-growing drug problem according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 15,000 people die every year of overdoses due to prescription painkillers. In 2010, 1 in 20 people in the United States over the age of 11 reported using prescription painkillers for non-medical reasons in the past year.

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