



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan Joins With Senator Hannon To Get Insurance Rights For Families Affected By Heroin Epidemic

JOHN J. FLANAGAN February 18, 2014

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With the recent death of actor Phillip Seymour Hoffman highlighting the growing impact of heroin and other drugs, Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) announced today that he is joining with Senator Kemp Hannon (6th Senate District) in his effort to provide families affected by addiction with the tools they need to fight this serious disease. Senators Flanagan and Hannon are sponsoring legislation ([S.4623](#)) that would put treatment decisions for those struggling with addiction in the hands of physicians as opposed to insurance companies.

Specifically, the legislation would amend state law to direct insurers to provide authorization and payment to appropriately licensed healthcare providers for detoxification, rehabilitation and intensive residential rehabilitation if such care is recommended by a physician.

For many families on Long Island, the struggle to get their loved ones the assistance they need is difficult and brings unneeded pressure that adds to the stress they already face. Insurance coverage denials force desperate families to turn to Medicaid for help, involve the court system in hopes that their child will be mandated into treatment or to forgo care altogether. That can lead many heroin-addicted young adults who are open to getting the help they need to instead give up on their road to recovery and sometimes the window of

opportunity closes forever.

Fatal overdoses have become increasingly common on Long Island and heroin arrests have soared. According to a recent Newsday article, heroin was responsible for killing a record 121 people on Long Island in 2012 and claimed at least 120 last year. Those are the two highest totals ever recorded and highlight the need to make comprehensive addiction treatment more available.

"With the abuse of heroin continuing to have a growing impact on our families, the reality is that the families of those struggling with addiction are in need of our help. By allowing physicians to make the decisions regarding treatment and care, we will allow those who are actively seeking help to get it. That will save lives, save families and help our entire community. This is the right thing to do and we need to make every effort to make it a reality," stated Senator Flanagan.

"Too often we spend weeks and even months, trying to get someone with a substance use disorder into treatment, only to have an insurance company representative who has never examined or even spoken to the patient ignore a doctor's professional judgment and arbitrarily deny or limit coverage," said Dr. Jeffrey Reynolds, Executive Director of the [Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence \(LICADD\)](#). "This practice wouldn't be acceptable for any other disease and I commend Senators Flanagan and Hannon for taking a stand that protects health care consumers, improves public health and limits the costs associated with addiction, both in terms of taxpayer dollars and human lives."

The bill is currently sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Michael Cusick (63rd Assembly District).

If any resident suspects that anyone in their lives is having issues with drugs or alcohol they are urged to contact LICADD by calling their offices at 631-979-1700 or 516-747-2606. [LICADD](#)

can help families review the warning signs, help come up with a plan of action and discuss treatment options for teens.