



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Martin J. Golden

## Senate Passes Bill to Prevent Drug Dealers From Preying on Children

MARTIN J. GOLDEN March 6, 2014

The New York State Senate today passed legislation to increase penalties for drug dealers who sell to children. The bill (S988A), sponsored by Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola), strengthens the felony charges for the sale of drugs by an adult to a child under the age of 14.

“Drugs destroy lives, and the victims of drug abuse are getting younger and younger,” said Senator Martins. “Drug use among children, especially heroin, is a growing epidemic on Long Island. Criminals who target young children and poison them with heroin and other controlled substances deserve tougher penalties. This legislation will give law enforcement another tool to keep these drug dealers off the streets and behind bars where they belong.

Recent data has shown an increase in drug use, especially opiate-based substances, by young adults and teenagers. There has also been a rise in overdose cases and overdose deaths. Many of these youngsters start experimenting in their teenage years with addicting prescription drugs and opiate-based prescription drugs.

A January 25, 2014, Newsday article referenced the rise in heroin use in the region, especially among youth. One Suffolk County drug treatment official referenced a recent incident where a 13-year-old girl was treated for a heroin addiction, which began after the 8th-grader had used MDMA and cocaine.

Under current law, anyone over the age of 21 who sells a controlled substance to a minor under the age of 17 can be charged with a class B felony. However, the law does not contain an enhanced penalty for selling a controlled substance to younger children. The bill passed today creates the new crime of criminal sale of a controlled substance to a child in the first degree. Adults over the age 18 who sell a controlled substance to a minor under the age of 14 would be charged with a class A-II felony.

The bill will be sent to the Assembly.