



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Passes Bill to Help Prevent Overdose Deaths by Increasing Access to Naloxone

DEAN G. SKELOS March 27, 2014

Measure Gives More People Access to Antidote That Prevents Accidental Overdose Deaths from Heroin and Other Opioids

The New York State Senate today passed legislation to help save lives by increasing access to a highly effective antidote for accidental drug overdose known as Naloxone or Narcan. The bill (S6477B), sponsored by Senator Kemp Hannon (R, Nassau County), allows authorized health care professionals to issue non-patient specific orders for Naloxone to certified training programs and pharmacies, which could then distribute the Naloxone kits and instruct how to properly administer it. If timely administered, Naloxone can prevent an overdose death.

“New York State, like the nation, is in the midst of a severe prescription drug crisis, and there is a need to look at the complete spectrum of drug abuse in order to address this crisis,” said Senator Hannon, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee.

Roundtables held by the Senate Health Committee in 2011 and 2012 raised the topic of access to Naloxone. Expanding upon the success of existing programs, more lives could be saved if Naloxone was available to addicts, their families and other people likely to be in a position to assist a person at risk of an opioid-related overdose. Currently, parents and family members of addicts are being turned away from Naloxone training programs or are attending the programs and not receiving Naloxone due to the shortage of prescribers participating in such programs.

“It is simple,” said Senator Hannon, “ensuring drug abusers, their family and friends can access Naloxone will save lives. I don’t see a downside here, giving people access to Naloxone will enable them to save their loved ones from tragic accidental overdose deaths.”

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that every 19 minutes, one person dies from an accidental overdose from prescription drug abuse. In an effort to curb this prescription drug crisis, the Legislature enacted the seminal I-STOP legislation in 2012. Due to the success of I-STOP, street access to controlled substances has declined. One unfortunate side effect of this is that drug abusers are turning to other drugs, such as heroin, as the cheaper alternative to prescription drugs.

“It has been estimated that heroin addiction on Long Island has increased nearly fourfold since 2011. This alarming statistic demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the state’s drug crisis. Ensuring families have access to Naloxone is the next necessary step” said Hannon.

In addition to the bill passed today, the Senate has taken several steps to focus on the increased use of heroin and other opioids in New York. The Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, chaired by Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County), was created earlier this month to examine the rise in the use of heroin and other opioids in New York State and will develop legislative recommendations. Forums will be held in regions throughout the state. The first forum will be held on April 8, 2014, at Suffolk County Community College and additional dates are being finalized.

In the Senate's budget resolution, \$5 million was proposed for increased heroin prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. The resolution also included a measure to increase the penalties for drug dealers by making it a class B felony for anyone to possess 50 or more individual packets of heroin and/or an amount of heroin with an aggregate value of at least \$300.

In 2011, the state enacted good Samaritan protections for witnesses and victims of overdoses. By removing the threat of prosecution, this measure encourages witnesses of an overdose to call 911 before it becomes deadly.

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