



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Phil Boyle

Press Release - Senator Griffo Hosts Heroin Task Force Forum in Utica

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SENATOR GRIFFO TO HOLD APRIL 15 FORUM ON HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION IN UTICA

UTICA - Senator Joseph A. Griffo today announced he will be hosting the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction in Utica from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the State Office Building, 207 Genesee St.

The forum is one of 12 being held throughout the state by the bipartisan task force created to solicit input on the rise in the use of heroin and other opioids in New York and to develop legislative recommendations for treating and preventing addiction and its consequences. The event is free and the public is encouraged to attend.

The forum will include members of the task force, experts in the fields of education, law enforcement, mental health and substance abuse and municipal officials.

“With heroin and other opiates growing in popularity, we face a dilemma: How can we safely dispense opiates for legitimate medical reasons, but prevent addiction? And how can we keep it off our streets?” asked Griffo, R-Rome. “The solution, I think, will be a combination of approaches: Education and early intervention, drug treatment and alternatives to incarceration and tougher sentencing laws.”

“I look forward to working with my colleagues and getting input from stakeholders so we can help decrease recidivism, get help for those who will use it, and prevent drug dealers from getting comfortable in our area,” the senator added.

Senator Phil Boyle, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, is chairman of the task force and is expected to attend this forum.

Members of the task force will examine the issues and solicit input from experts and other stakeholders about addiction prevention and treatment options, the rise in heroin and opioid use, and the potential for drug-related crimes and other negative community impacts. The task force will then develop recommendations which will be used to draft legislation to address the issues raised.

Heroin’s deadly effects are well established, and overdoses are on the rise across the state. The Insight House, a treatment facility in Utica, had more heroin and opiate addicts in 2013 than ever before, according to WKTV. The station also reported that Oneida County Drug Court has seen a 25 to 35

percent increase in heroin users over the last couple of years.

The Upstate New York Poison Center fielded almost four times as many heroin-related calls in 2013 than it did just three years prior, according to the Observer Dispatch.

“Heroin abuse is disruptive to our quality of life. We’ve seen an uptick in spinoff crimes as addicts steal from others and burglarize homes to keep themselves high. I look forward to sharing our ‘on-the-ground’ experience with our state representatives so, together, we can minimize the flow of opiates in our county,” said Oneida County Sheriff Rob Maciol.

Oneida County District Attorney Scott D. McNamara added: “Our courts are becoming increasingly crowded with opiate abusers. Working with our state lawmakers and our pharmacists, it’s harder than ever to get controlled substances without a legitimate prescription. Unfortunately, many of those addicts have turned to heroin – which has become cheaper and more prevalent in recent years – for their fix. Now it’s time to partner with our leaders in law enforcement and our state lawmakers to develop strategies to curb heroin sales in Oneida County.”

“There is a growing concern in all communities as it pertains to an increase in opioid and heroin use. We will face this issue head on,” said Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. “This task force is a step in the right direction. It will put all the stakeholders in the room to discuss all the approaches the state Senate can take to address this issue legislatively. I support this task force's efforts and Oneida County government is ready and willing to be at the table.”

Due to the Senate Majority's efforts, the recently enacted 2014-15 state budget included \$2.45 million for initiatives to provide prevention, treatment and addiction services to address the growing problems of heroin and opioid abuse. In addition to the creation of the task force, the Senate passed legislation (S6477B) in March to help save lives by allowing authorized health care professionals to increase public access to Narcan/Naloxone which, if timely administered, can prevent an overdose death.