



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk Measure Will Help Fight Adolescent Drug Addiction

CECILIA TKACZYK September 4, 2014

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State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk, working with local officials and advocates, has introduced legislation that will help address the growing epidemic of drug abuse and addiction in vulnerable children as young as 12 years old.

Senator Tkaczyk noted recent studies showing an alarming increase in the use of drugs by middle and high school students. Her measure would help parents detect a potential problem by allowing for drug screening of children between the ages of 12 and 18 as part of their annual health care physical examination.

“Drug use among vulnerable young people is reaching epidemic proportions,” Senator Tkaczyk said. “I worked closely with health care providers and educators to develop this legislation and ensure that parents are aware of potential problems and can secure the treatment their children need.”

Dr. Govind Rao is an Amsterdam pediatrician who has taken a leadership role in fighting drug abuse among young school children. Dr. Rao said, “I thank Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk for sponsoring this important measure which will help deter young, vulnerable children from trying illegal drugs and reduce the potential for becoming addicted.”

Ladan Alomar, executive director of Centro Civico in Amsterdam, said, “Centro Civico is dedicated to helping young people avoid the horrors of drug use and addiction. Senator Tkaczyk’s measure will help children who need help, without destroying their opportunities for a successful and productive future.”

Rev. Kent A. Mc Heard said, “As president of the Greater Amsterdam School District Board of Education, as a parent of two school children in the district and as the spouse of an educator, I strongly support Senator Tkaczyk's bill to help fight drug abuse in our schools. While protecting our children is our primary goal, I also appreciate the fiscal implications and the fact that drug addiction costs our society approximately \$170 billion annually. Imagine if just some of that money could be used to educate our students and improve our schools.”

Margaret Clark, Prevention Educator for HFM Prevention Council and a member of MCAP (Montgomery County Allies in Prevention Coalition) said, "The goals of Senator Tkaczyk's bill to identify potential drug problems and to intervene early are proactive, cost effective and in the best interests of our youth."

Senator Tkaczyk's bill -- **S.7934** -- provides four major initiatives that serve to focus on adolescent drug use, and treat it as a disease:

- 1) Allows for drug screening of children between the ages of 12 and 18 as part of their annual health care physical examination;
- 2) Requires health insurance to cover the cost of these drug screens without co-payment, deductible or co-insurance;
- 3) Provides that the results of these drug screens remain confidential, even from the health insurance company; and
- 4) Provides that in the absence of any other indications of child abuse or neglect, a positive drug screen, by itself, does not meet the requirements of child abuse reporting by mandatory reporters.