



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

NEW LEGISLATION WOULD PROVIDE HEROIN USERS WITH A FIGHTING CHANCE TO BREAK FREE FROM DRUG'S DEADLY GRIP

PATTY RITCHIE February 4, 2016

| ISSUE: **DRUG ABUSE**



Addicts desperate to break free from heroin's deadly grip would get more of the doctor-ordered treatment that they need, under new legislation introduced in the State Legislature by Senator Patty Ritchie and Assemblyman Al Stirpe.

The bipartisan bill, S.6478-A, would require insurers to cover up to 90 days of inpatient treatment for drug abusers. Current law requires coverage for inpatient treatment, but it does not establish a time limit, and doctors, abusers and family members all have pointed to examples of addicts finding themselves back on the street before they are fully healed.

“In public hearings, and from the personal accounts of addicts, their doctors and families, I’ve heard too often about abusers who want to quit, but are forced to leave treatment too soon, before they can truly escape from the downward spiral of drug addiction because they cannot afford to remain in treatment,” said Senator Ritchie, who has been studying the problem of heroin abuse as a member of the Senate’s Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction.

“My bill would ensure that recovering addicts get the medical and professional care they need to break the cycle of drug abuse and dependency. This will save lives and protect our community from dangerous drugs,” Senator Ritchie said.

“Heroin is a drug that doesn’t discriminate—this substance has the power to destroy lives in small towns and in big cities and to take hold of anyone, regardless of their economic status,” said Assemblyman Al Stirpe, who represents parts of Central New York.

“If we want to stop the spread of heroin in our communities, we need to offer real help to those who are seeking it. I’m proud to support this bill, which has the potential not only to save lives, but also to stop the spread of heroin in New York State.”

Access to treatment was a central issue identified by the Senate Task Force in helping to stem the alarming growth of heroin overdose and deaths. New laws enacted last year dramatically expanded access to treatment, but still do not go far enough to help recovering addicts live their lives drug-free.

Recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show 47,055 people died from drug overdoses in the United States in 2014—61 percent involving heroin. Since 2010, heroin overdose deaths have tripled.

In addition, the CDC also reports that some of the most significant increases in heroin use are occurring in demographic groups with historically low rates of heroin use, namely women, the privately insured and those with higher incomes.