



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## RITCHIE JOINS COLLEAGUES IN TAKING STEPS TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST HEROIN

PATTY RITCHIE May 17, 2016



State Senator Patty Ritchie today joined colleagues in passing a package of bills aimed at stopping the growth of New York's heroin and opioid crisis, as well as making it easier to help those looking to break free from the deadly grip of these substances.

Measures passed by the Senate today are the result of a report compiled by the New York State Senate Joint Task Force on Heroin, on which Senator Ritchie serves. Based on forums held across the state—including one in Watertown—to address New York's ongoing heroin

epidemic, the report outlines a four-pronged approach that would stop the growth of the heroin and opioid crisis, including efforts aimed at prevention, treatment, recovery and law enforcement.

“Far too often, we hear about the loss of life or senseless crimes that are caused by heroin addiction,” said Senator Ritchie.

“This is a drug that’s not only destroying lives—it’s tearing apart our communities. I know that we still have a long way to go when it comes to stopping the spread of heroin, but these measures represent another strong step toward making our state safer.”

Measures passed by the Senate today include those that seek to better educate the public about the dangers of heroin abuse, enhance access to treatment, facilitate successful recoveries from addiction and give law enforcement the tools to stop the spread of heroin and abuse of opioids.

Also today, the state announced St. Lawrence County’s Seaway Valley Council for Alcoholism/Substance Abuse Prevention, Inc. would receive \$250,000 in new funding to enhance services for individuals and families struggling with drug abuse.

Legislation passed today builds on Senator Ritchie’s prior work to address the state’s heroin crisis. In 2014, legislation Senator Ritchie sponsored to expand insurance coverage for treating heroin addiction was signed into law. Access to treatment was one of the major issues identified at a Heroin and Opioid Addiction Forum hosted by Senator Ritchie.

Earlier this year, Senator Ritchie and members of the Task Force advocated for \$166 million to be included in the new state budget for treatment, outpatient and residential services necessary to help those struggling with heroin and opioid abuse. The funding represents a \$25 million increase over the Executive Budget’s original proposal.

In addition, Senator Ritchie has also helped to secure vitally important funding that's continuing to help stop the spread of heroin in Central and Northern New York. In recent years, she has delivered \$80,000 to provide students in the region she represents with anti-drug education and counseling programs, as well as \$50,000 in funding to help local law enforcement expand its efforts in the fight against illegal substances.