



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin S. Parker

## Combating Drug Abuse

KEVIN S. PARKER June 19, 2017

| ISSUE: **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**



**BROOKLYN, NY (6/19/17)** – To bring substantive resources to communities ravaged by alcohol and drug abuse, State Senator Kevin Parker has introduced a series of bills targeting this critical issue. The forward-thinking bills are aimed at helping curb the alarming increase in drug, alcohol, and substance abuse in New York State.

In the past 20 years, there have been many lives lost and families broken apart due to this epidemic. However, the Brooklyn lawmaker is hoping that his proposed legislation will not be too late to help people like 26-year old Steve Vargas who found himself battling drug and

alcohol abuse for two years. Because of his addiction, Vargas lost his job as a food handler in Manhattan's meatpacking district, and ultimately ended up suffering from depression, mood swings, and rages.

With the help he received from Cornerstone Treatment Facilities Network - a community-based drug rehabilitation program, Mr. Vargas overcame his addiction and regained a hold on his life. Today, he is a strong supporter of any kind of intervention such as the laws proposed by Senator Parker that are currently in the State Senate that specifically: *establishes a public awareness educational program on heroin, and expands the community chemical dependency services program* (Senate Bill number S.2351 and S.3591 respectively).

"Although I am grateful for the support of my family and the staff at Cornerstone, I wish more could be done around prevention," says Vargas who at the height of his addiction drank alcohol and smoked marijuana throughout the day, every day. "As a teenager growing up in New York City, drugs and alcohol are often glamorized by our peers. I wish more could be done to show youth, such as myself, the negative effects of drugs and alcohol," he concluded.

Senator Parker, who is the Ranking Democratic Member on the State Senate Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Committee, has had the unfortunate experience of losing a loved one to drug and alcohol abuse. "I have lost family members to substance abuse, and understand firsthand its devastating effects on individuals and their families," said Senator Parker.

"When communities of color like the one I represent were being devastated and further marginalized by drug and opioid abuse, society's and government's response at the time was to launch an ill-conceived 'war on drugs.' This included enacting the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws that brought about inhumane, lengthy, and more punitive prison sentences for drug related crimes. Today, as the problem of drug abuse and addiction has finally manifested in suburban and rural communities, it has been declared a public health problem." The Senator continued, "Nevertheless, I remain eager and faithful to creating

meaningful laws to combat drug abuse, while affording fairness and justice to communities that have been torn apart by the so-called war on drugs.”

Senator Parker’s legislation has also received strong community support from organizations such as the Fortune Society and the Drug Policy Alliance. “We applaud Senator Parker’s efforts to create legislation that will increase community awareness and education, while reducing the stigma associated with seeking necessary mental health and substance treatment,” said JoAnne Page, President and CEO of The Fortune Society.

In response to Senator Parker’s announcement, Dionna King, Policy Coordinator at the Drug Policy Alliance said, “The Drug Policy Alliance’s mission is to advance policies and attitudes that best reduce the harms of both drug use and drug prohibition, and to promote the sovereignty of individuals over their minds and bodies. Our staff knows that addressing problematic drug use will require comprehensive approaches and evidence-based solutions that can help save lives, reduce criminalization, and address racial disparities. This package of legislation proposed by Senator Parker will create access to effective, community-based care and provide much-needed education on appropriate responses to overdose. We look forward to supporting his efforts to pass forward-thinking legislation.”

### **About State Senator Kevin Parker**

Senator Kevin S. Parker is intimately familiar with the needs of his ethnically diverse Brooklyn district comprised of sections of Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington, Windsor Terrace, and Park Slope. A lifelong Brooklyn resident, he is the Ranking Democratic Member on the Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunications, as well as the Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse.

Senator Parker is the Whip of the Senate Democratic Conference; Member of the Senate Democratic Conference Policy Group; Member of the Senate Select Committee on

Technology & Innovation; and Member of the Senate Democratic Minority and Women-Owned Business Task Force (MWBE).

For the 2017-2018 Legislative Session, Senator Parker serves on the Senate Standing Committees on Finance; Rules; Higher education; Labor; Insurance, and Banks.

To learn more about Senator Parker and his initiatives on behalf of working families across New York State, please visit [www.nysenate.gov/senators/kevin-s-parker](http://www.nysenate.gov/senators/kevin-s-parker).

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2017-S2351

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Relates to a public awareness educational program on heroin; appropriation

January 13, 2017

In Senate Committee **Finance**

Sponsored by **Kevin S. Parker**

Do you support this bill?

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## 2017-S3591

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor

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Establishes the community chemical dependency services expansion program

January 25, 2017

In Senate Committee [Alcoholism and Drug Abuse](#)

Sponsored by [Kevin S. Parker](#)

Do you support this bill?