



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George Amedore

## Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction Announces Additional Public Forums

GEORGE AMEDORE October 16, 2017

Senators George Amedore, Fred Akshar, and Chris Jacobs, Co-Chairs of the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, today announced additional public forums to continue to examine the issues faced by the state due to increased heroin and opioid abuse.

The forums follow a series of meetings held by the Task Force this summer in Johnstown, Buffalo, and Long Island to solicit input from treatment providers, law enforcement, educators, and family members in order to formulate further recommendations for legislative action to combat the heroin and opioid epidemic. The upcoming forums will be held in Cortland and Orange Counties.

Senator Fred Akshar said, “Some of the best solutions and insights on critical issues come from the ground level. I’m proud that the Senate’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction continues to take a bottom-up approach in dealing with the scourge of addiction. By listening to stakeholders in communities across our state, we’re better suited to assess our needs, our successes and our next steps in this battle to save lives.”

“The Task Force hearings conducted to date have been very informative and I am looking

forward to hearing from law enforcement, health care professionals and service providers in Cortland and Newburgh in the coming weeks,” said Task Force Co-Chair Senator Chris Jacobs. “The engagement we are having with stakeholders and the practical, real life insights we are getting at these hearings will be extremely beneficial in developing the Task Force’s legislative agenda and priorities next session.”

“Earlier this year, the Task Force held productive meetings throughout the State that provided valuable insight into what steps we should be taking next when it comes to our efforts to combat the heroin and opioid epidemic. I am looking forward to continuing the discussion, and want to thank Senators Seward and Larkin for hosting the Task Force in their communities,” said Senator George Amedore.

**2017 Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction Additional Public Forums:**

**Cortland:** Wednesday, October 25th, 4:00 pm, Cortland County Office Building Auditorium, 60 Central Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045

**Newburgh:** Tuesday, November 14th, 10:00 am, Newburgh Armory Unity Center, 321 S. William Street, Newburgh, NY 12550

Senator James L. Seward said, “Heroin and opioid addiction devastates lives, families, and communities and it is vital that we continue to target this epidemic from all angles – prevention, treatment, and recovery. Previous hearings held by the Senate’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction have been instrumental in developing new laws and state programs that are having a positive effect, however, the tragedies have not stopped. This hearing in Cortland is an opportunity for local experts and those on the front line to detail what is working and what still needs to be done as we explore additional measures to combat this public health crisis.”

“As our communities continue to suffer due to the opioid epidemic it is more important than ever to receive valuable feedback from medical professionals, law enforcement officials, local residents and other stakeholders. We need to hear from all parties involved so that we can address this issue head on and continue to implement a plan that gives all those fighting this battle the resources they need,” said Senator Bill Larkin.

Based on recommendations put forth last year by the Task Force, a comprehensive package of bills was signed into law to address the heroin and addiction crisis in New York State by providing addiction prevention, access to treatment, and support for New Yorkers in recovery. Highlights of the legislative package included continuing education for prescribers, limits on initial prescriptions of opioids for acute pain, and the creation of a Narcan database to help track overdose reversals. Other measures removed insurance barriers by removing prior authorization requirements for treatment and expanding coverage and access to naloxone.

Last year’s state budget included \$189 million in funding to help address the challenges caused by increased heroin and opioid abuse in communities throughout New York State. This included an increase of \$25 million above the Executive’s proposal that was advocated for by the Task Force to support additional prevention, treatment, and recovery services including adolescent clubhouses, family navigators, on-call peer support, community recovery centers, additional treatment beds, and supportive housing units.

This year, the Senate’s Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction was instrumental in securing \$214 million in the budget – a record-high level of funding that will be used to strengthen prevention, treatment, recovery and education services across the state.

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