



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction to Hold Series of Public Forums Throughout the State

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Albany, NY - Last year, the Senate's Joint Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction continued to make significant investments in addressing the drug epidemic by securing over \$200 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.

Based on recommendations put forth 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. Senator Terrence Murphy, then co-Chair of the Task Force, sponsored legislation to curb the over-prescription of opioids for patients with short-term, acute pain. Passing both Senate and Assembly unanimously, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the bill, S8139, into law in 2016. The impetus for U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's Opioid Addiction Prevention Act came from Senator Murphy's bill.

Highlights of the 2017 legislative package included continuing education for prescribers 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.

The Joint Senate Task Force, currently co-chaired by Senators George Amedore, Fred Akshar, and Chris Jacobs, continues to examine the issues faced by the state due to increased heroin and opioid abuse.

The Task Force recently announced a series of forums on heroin and opioid addiction that will be held throughout the state. The forums will be held in Binghamton, Hudson, and at Pace University in Pleasantville. These meetings are designed to give Task Force members the opportunity to solicit input from stakeholders in the community -- including providers, law enforcement, educators, and family members -- in order to formulate further recommendations for legislative action.

"Every day we hear another tragic story about a beloved family member whose life spiraled downward from abuse to addiction, to death," said Senator Murphy. "The Heroin Task Force

is at the forefront of advancing ground-breaking treatment and education methods as well as legislation that will provide concrete solutions for individuals and families battling addiction. I will continue to lend my voice and support to their efforts to stem the tide of heroin and opioid addiction in our communities."

"New York State continues to be the leader in the fight against heroin and opioid addiction," said Senator George Amedore. "It is imperative that we continue to bring attention to this issue and work to ensure that all New Yorkers who struggle with addiction will be connected to treatment and recovery services. These forums will provide the Task Force with valuable insight on the most effective ways to improve prevention and education efforts, remove insurance barriers, and make treatment options more readily available."

Senator Fred Akshar said, "In my previous career as an undercover narcotics investigator, I witnessed families being ripped apart by this heroin epidemic. As a Co-Chair of the Joint Senate Task Force, I am proud of the work we have accomplished so far that focuses on prevention, treatment and recovery, education and enforcement. There is no silver bullet, and we must continue to listen to families and communities across the state to identify needs so we can help direct the appropriate resources and craft comprehensive legislation to continue fighting this scourge. The heroin epidemic did not arrive at our doorstep overnight, and it will not be eliminated overnight either. It knows no social or economic class, no race or creed. We need to continue working together as a state to fight this problem. Lives and families across New York depend on it."

"The Heroin and Opioid Addiction Task Force is committed to improving upon the gains we made last year in providing funding for treatment, implementing proven methods of recovery services and providing law enforcement with the tools they need to disrupt the flow of illegal substances," said Senator Chris Jacobs. "I am confident that the upcoming

hearing in Binghamton will provide valuable insights that will inform our policy decisions and help determine where our resources will have the greatest impact."

The Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction will be meeting on Thursday, February 15th, 6:30 pm, at the Pace University Pleasantville Campus, at the Stephen J. Friedman Room, Willcox Hall, 861 Bedford Road, Pleasantville, NY 10570. Oral testimony is by invitation only but the public is invited and encouraged to attend.