



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Senator Murphy: Drug Take Back Act Prevents Unused Drugs From Feeding Addictions and Harming the Environment

TERRENCE MURPHY April 26, 2018

| ISSUE: **SHED THE MEDS, PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, MEDICATION, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, COMBATING HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION; SHED THE MEDS**



Albany, NY - When individuals trapped in the grip of opioid addiction wonder where their lives may have gone wrong, they usually don't have to look any further than their own medicine cabinets. Leftover prescription medicines stored at home are a convenient and potent way for people to get hooked. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 140 Americans die every day from drug overdoses, with 91 of those

deaths specifically attributed to opioids.

New York, like the rest of the nation, continues to struggle with the opioid addiction crisis. A new bill, S7354, staunchly supported by Senator Terrence Murphy, prevents opioids or other unused prescriptions from being abused and protects water supplies from contamination. The bill, sponsored by Senator Kemp Hannon and Senator Tom O'Mara, creates the "Drug Take Back Act," which requires certain manufacturers to operate a take-back program to accept and properly dispose of prescription drugs. The Senate passed the bill on April 25, in time to mark National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day on Saturday, April 28.



"It's time for the pharmaceutical companies who have made billions of dollars off of pain medication to be part of the solution," Senator Murphy said. "My office gets dozens of calls a month asking for the best place to discard unwanted or unused medicine and this legislation will finally provide a unified, statewide drug take back, to be paid for by big pharma."

Senator Hannon, Chair of the Senate's Health Committee, said, "New York has an opioid epidemic demanding attention now. Communities, law enforcement, elected officials and pharmacies holding special take-back days is just not enough. More aggressive efforts to curb the tide of opioid addiction are essential. Providing New Yorkers with safe and accessible disposal methods will help prevent addiction, which often starts with misuse of unused medications. This legislation not only helps address the opioid epidemic, it makes sure all medications are properly disposed of and do not contaminate our water supplies."

"It's incredibly important to do anything and everything we can to complement and support the efforts of local law enforcement and other community leaders to combat prescription drug abuse," stated Senator O'Mara, Chair of the Senate's Environmental Conservation Committee. "These efforts include National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day coming up on April 28 and initiatives like this one to facilitate the collection, and safe and responsible disposal of unused medications. This proposal to greatly expand the number of permanent, locally based drop-off locations would be a very positive, cost-effective addition to the state's ongoing, overall strategy to protect our communities and local environments."

The Drug Take Back Act holds pharmaceutical manufacturers responsible for all costs of the take-back program, ranging from public education and awareness to drug collection, transport, and destruction. The Act further requires chain pharmacies and mail-order pharmacies to provide consumers with collection options including drop boxes and prepaid

mail-back envelopes.

In addition to getting excess drugs out of medicine cabinets where they are ripe for abuse, a statewide drug take back program will help ensure these and other drugs are not improperly disposed of by flushing or other means that results in harm to our water bodies and impacts aquatic life. Last year New York made a historic \$2.5 billion investment in improving and protecting our water, keeping drugs out of our water supplies is an absolute necessity.



Senator Murphy has operated a highly successful "Shed the Meds" program since taking office in 2014. The prescription drop-off program, conducted in conjunction with local police departments and drug treatment organizations at various locations throughout the 40th

Senate District, takes more than 1,000 pounds of prescription drugs out of circulation each year. "Shed the Meds" and other community-based take-back programs served as the impetus for the Drug Take Back Act legislation.

Senator Murphy also co-chaired the Senate's Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction. Traveling across New York State he heard first hand accounts of people from all parts of the state struggling due to addiction to opioids and painkillers. As a result of his leadership role, New York passed milestone legislation to limit prescriptions to seven days for acute injuries, enhanced education requirements for prescribers and battled the insurance industry to reduce hurdles for those seeking treatment. Senator Murphy currently remains an active member of the task force.

Murphy continued, "We often see the first supply of opioids an addict usually gets is leftover medication that was prescribed to a family member or friend. In order to break the cycle of addiction, we need to cut off this supply and dispose of these drugs before they can be abused or discarded in our water supply. Just as individuals can return toner cartridges, car batteries or motor oil to the businesses they purchased them from, New Yorkers should be able to dispose of potentially hazardous drugs, whether it's through a prepaid envelope, or by putting it in a drop box."

The Senate passed a second bill, S6673, on April 25 that requires the state Departments of Health and Environmental Conservation to create, maintain, and regularly update a statewide web-based listing of prescription drug disposal sites, events, and other disposal options for consumers. The site would be searchable by zip code so New Yorkers can find a site closest to them when they need to get rid of prescriptions or other drugs in their homes.

The bills were sent to the Assembly.