



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## SERINO AND MOLINARO LEAD SECOND COLLABORATIVE SUMMIT TO COMBAT THE HEROIN AND OPIOID EPIDEMIC

SUSAN SERINO June 5, 2018

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POUGHKEEPSIE, NY - With summer quickly approaching and the school year coming to a close, NYS Senator Sue Serino and Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro recently brought together more than thirty local stakeholders to discuss summer prevention and education strategies as part of their continuing dialogue to combat the heroin and opioid epidemic.

*“As the number of individuals suffering from addiction continue to rise, one of my highest priorities is finding a way to reach our students to ensure they have the tools and resources necessary to stand against this terrible epidemic,” said Senator Sue Serino. “This event was about finding unique ways to connect with our students during their summer break, and to ensure that we hit the ground running effectively at the start of the next school year. Combatting the heroin and opioid epidemic will take committed partners at every level, working together, consistently throughout the year, and this event serves as a great reminder of just how many of these partners we have right here in Dutchess County.”*

*Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “I appreciate Senator Serino’s continued efforts to combat the opioid epidemic facing our nation, the greatest public health crisis of our lifetime. Like every community in our country, Dutchess County has been touched by this scourge. Our previous discussion has already resulted in action in the Senate, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of today’s roundtable positively affect many around our state and our continued collaboration with Senator Serino and committed stakeholders, all with the goal of saving lives here in Dutchess County.”*

Participants from today’s event included health professionals, addiction specialists, school and government officials, members of law enforcement, and those who have experienced addiction first-hand.

Dr. Kia Newman, Dutchess County’s Deputy Medical Examiner, emphasized that overdose death numbers have increased by 30% within the last year, and that the number has continued to rise.

Participant Dr. Martin Handler, Superintendent of the Pine Plains Central School District, discussed how students are facing a great deal of stress and anxiety, which can be the cause of them turning to opioids. Mr. Michael Tierney, Superintendent of the Dover Union Free School District, added to this point noting that, students are unable to escape from the stresses of school. When they return home, they are on social media, or texting their friends about the school day, and he argued that this never-ending cycle adds to the stress and pressures that can sometimes lead students to turn to unhealthy choices.

While other issues were discussed, including treatment styles, the main goal of reaching school-aged students was clear. Anthony Eack, founder of Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life, noted that parents need to become more involved in the conversation, and Dr. Handler, once again, noted that there needs to be an emphasis on mental health, and providing students with the resources available to balance their stress from inside the school building, as well as from their outside life.

At the state level, as a member of the NYS Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid addiction, Senator Serino was able to help secure \$247 million in this year's state budget to fund prevention, treatment, recovery, and enforcement across the state. One of the key parts of this year's budget included \$3.8 million for the development and implementation of jail-based addiction and treatment services. The Senate also codified the peer-to-peer program, which allows those in recovery to use their experience to help others overcome addiction.

At the county level, Molinaro, with the support of the Dutchess County Legislature, has enhanced Dutchess County's focus on addressing the opioid epidemic with additional addiction and mental health initiatives for 2018. These resources are highlighted in Dutchess County's new "**Breaking Through**" initiative – an effort to address the stigma that is too often attached to mental health and addiction issues, serving as one of the barriers to an individual getting the help they need. In 2018, Dutchess County has been adding to its 24/7 intervention resources, as well as enhancing other mental health and addiction supports including:

- Additional social worker positions for HELPLINE and the Stabilization Center;
- An additional social worker, funded by Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital, who works with the Mobile Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT) to assist with emergency room diversions;
- Ongoing prevention efforts that include working with school districts, in collaboration with CAPE and providing and promoting Second Step Curriculum, which focuses on

social emotional learning, substance use prevention, and coping skills/emotion regulation;

- Expansion of the Recovery Coach program – counselors who have successfully overcome their own addiction and can provide motivational coaching, mentoring and recovery planning;
- The Mobile Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT) is working collaboratively with the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department in a new “Behavioral Evaluation Action Team” (BEAT) to help better address the needs of at-risk individuals, including those who are homeless, battling addiction or have a mental health issue.
- Coordination with local pharmacies throughout Dutchess County to help educate people the risk factors for addiction and increasing the availability of Narcan.
- New Addiction Prevention Coordinator to serve as a single point of contact responsible for tracking efforts, collecting data, coordinating training and working with various stakeholders to ensure an effective and coordinated response to opioid abuse in Dutchess County.

This collaborative event is the second in a series that Serino and Molinaro hope to host throughout the remainder of the year as they seek innovative and out-of-the-box solutions to the crisis.