



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

SENATE PASSES STEPHEN'S LAW

ROBERT G. ORTT May 14, 2019

| ISSUE: **MENTAL HEALTH, COMBAT HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION**

Today, Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda) and his colleagues in the Senate passed Senate Bill 4741-A, known as “Stephen’s Law,” which will allow authorized guardians and caregivers to receive notifications when medical care or rehabilitation appointments are missed by individuals in recovery programs.

Introduced in December of 2018, Stephen’s Law is named after Stephen Canastraro, Jr. On the morning of August 24, 2018, the mother of Stephen Canastraro, Jr. went to wake him, only to find him cold and unresponsive. In the days prior to his death, Stephen demonstrated warning signs of relapse to his health providers including missed appointments and drug use.

Under the laws at the time, health providers were not required to inform authorized guardians of the relapse signs, and neither Stephen's mother nor Save the Michaels, Stephen’s recovery assistance organization, were notified of his missed appointments or positive drug screens in the days before Stephen’s death.

“Although the passing of this law was too late to help Stephen, the lives that are saved because of it will be in memory of him,” said Ortt. “The advocacy by Stephen’s mother, Angela, and treatment programs like Save the Michaels should be commended for helping

get this legislation passed. I want to thank Sen. Harckham for co-sponsoring this legislation and working with me to help save lives.”

Under this legislation, medical providers would be required to call a patient's loved ones – individuals who already have the patient's consent to access their medical information – and inform them of observations that could be warning signs of relapse. Advocates believe this change would enable patients’ support networks to intervene when an issue arises and help save lives.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S4741A

- 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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Enacts "Stephen's law"; requires certified treatment programs to notify patients of their right to name an emergency contact

March 22, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Pete Harckham**

Do you support this bill?