



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Commends Decision to Bring Addiction Services Commissioner into Emergency Response Planning

PETE HARCKHAM June 18, 2020

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*Albany, NY*— New York State Senator Pete Harckham commended Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today for signing the legislation that will include the state commissioner from the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) as a member of the state's disaster management team. The legislation, which was sponsored by Harckham, was approved unanimously in the Senate last month.

“I am pleased that Governor Cuomo signed the legislation that I introduced with Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal (S.8363 / A.10509) that will appoint the Commissioner of OASAS to the New York State Office of Emergency Management,” said Harckham.

“Commissioner-level representation for the many state residents who are under care for Substance Use Disorder has been missing from top-level emergency planning and response for too long. Treatment providers here in New York and across the country are truly on the frontline in safeguarding and caring for our residents. They will be better served now during health emergencies and other crises from the start.”

Harckham had discovered at a statewide roundtable he had convened of Substance Use Treatment providers and association leaders, as the novel coronavirus pandemic surged in New York, that providers were left out of the initial conversation regarding PPE and testing. The coordination efforts of the state’s Office of Emergency Management include various other state agencies and liaisons with municipalities, businesses and not-for-profits—entities that behavioral health and substance use providers are working with as well.

“We need to be committed to caring for all of our residents,” added Harckham. “The coronavirus pandemic pointed to where integration of OASAS and treatment providers into statewide emergency planning efforts would have helped a great deal.”

A link to Harckham’s speech in the Senate on the OASAS bill prior to its being signed into law can be found on his Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/57594457105/videos/569260357109056/>.