



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham, Senate Colleagues to Call for Purdue Settlement, More Stimulus \$\$ to Go Toward Improved Treatment Services

PETE HARCKHAM October 27, 2020

| ISSUE: **COMBATING HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, COVID-19; CORONAVIRUS; SUBSTANCE ABUSE; SUBSTANCE TREATMENT**



*Peekskill, NY* - New York State Senator Pete Harckham, along with Senators Timothy Kennedy and David Carlucci, called today for expected funds heading to New York State from the federal government's Purdue Pharma opioid settlement and a portion of the future stimulus / pandemic relief funding to go toward improved treatment services.

“Because our treatment providers are in dire need of financial support, funding from both the Purdue settlement and the next round of federal stimulus is a must,” said Harckham. “This is money that should go to providing vital, lifesaving services, and not to fill potholes or to fill the general fund.”

The Purdue Pharma settlement is for more than \$8 billion. The company pleaded guilty in federal court to criminal charges for conspiracy to defraud the function of the U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency, representing that they maintained an anti-diversion program when, in fact, the company continued to market products to over 100 health care providers suspected of diverting opioids. Purdue Pharma was also found guilty of facilitating the dispensing of its opioid products without a legitimate medical purpose.

The announcement by the three senators, who were joined by a number of Substance Use Disorder advocates, was made here at the Lexington Center for Recovery.

Harckham is chair of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse; and Carlucci is chair of the Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. The two senators, along with Senator Gustavo Rivera, chair of the Senate Committee on Health, served on the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction & Overdose Prevention during the last senate term, and Kennedy hosted the Task Force’s two public hearings in Buffalo, NY last year.

It is agreed that increased funding will allow treatment systems and services to be expanded enough to meet people where they are and personalize treatments.

“We need funding for providers like the Lexington Center here and others across the state to meet their mission goals,” said Carlucci. “Whether it is necessary medicines or different treatments, we need to make it all more accessible to those who need them. Right now, we

are at an 'all hands-on deck' moment. Too many residents are slipping through the cracks, and we cannot let that happen."

The three senators and treatment advocates expressed gratitude to New York State Attorney general Letitia James for the hard work of pursuing the settlement with Purdue Pharma. The sad fact is that overdose numbers are on the rise because of the coronavirus pandemic, and access to treatment is being strained now by 20% of funding being withheld because of state budget constraints. Meanwhile, new safety procedures in place at treatment centers are shrinking capacity.

"We are doing the best we can, but it is difficult," said Dr. Adrienne Marcus, co-founder of Lexington Center for Recovery and its executive director.

During the Task Force's visit to Buffalo, Kennedy noted that roundtable discussions with top experts, including doctors, researchers and treatment providers, all sounded the same theme: the need for more investment in treatment and prevention programs.

"Today, we're joining together to call for just that," said Kennedy. "Any settlement money from the Purdue Pharma case should unequivocally be channeled into resources for those who have suffered from opioid addiction at the hands of this pharmaceutical company."

Although he was unable to attend the announcement, Rivera provided a statement that read: "Opioids have claimed the lives of too many New Yorkers and the Covid-19 pandemic has only made matters worse. The only real way to fight back and save lives is to aggressively invest in our harm reduction and treatment service. I am committed to working alongside Senator Harckham to ensure that we continue to identify every resource at our disposal to truly expand and improve the treatment services available to New Yorkers."

Susan Salomone, founder and executive board member of Drug Crisis in Our Backyard, an advocacy group, said, "New York will be awarded this money for the irreparable loss of life, and the pain and suffering experienced by too many families. No amount of this money can ever bring back my son. But what we can do with the settlement funding is ensure that we do everything in our power to stop the cycle of addiction before it starts, and guarantee to those struggling with addiction that the help they need is readily available."

"Purdue Pharma's guilty plea is an important milestone in efforts underway across the country to hold bad actors accountable for fueling the opioid crisis by putting profits over public health and safety," said John Coppola, executive director of the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Use Providers (ASAP). "As the addiction field in New York is perennially underfunded, we urge the court to mandate that a significant percentage of the funds from the settlement go to support addiction services. Funding community-based addiction programs will save lives and ensure that heroic, essential frontline healthcare workers keep their jobs."