



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Urges President-Elect Biden to Target \$38.5B of Aid to Substance Use Treatment

PETE HARCKHAM December 21, 2020

| ISSUE: **COMBATING THE OPIOID CRISIS, COVID-19; CORONAVIRUS; SUBSTANCE ABUSE; SUBSTANCE TREATMENT**



Peekskill, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham urged President-Elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr. to target \$38.5 billion in federal funding toward behavioral health organizations and Substance Use Disorder treatment programs in order to combat the country’s opioid overdose crisis.

Harckham's request, which was made in a letter that was sent today to President-Elect Biden, follows a recent report in The Washington Post that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned overdose deaths in the U.S. are "accelerating," with provisional data showing a 12.3% increase from last year—resulting in nearly 80,000 people lost to Substance Use Disorder.

"I see the carnage first hand every day," writes Harckham in the letter. "I strongly support the request for \$38.5 billion in incremental funding that was made earlier this year by the National Council for Behavioral Health and 40 other national groups addressing mental health and Substance Use Disorder. And I respectfully urge you to make this a priority next year."

Harckham is chair of the New York State Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, and founding co-chair of the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction & Overdose Prevention.

During the presidential campaign Biden released a plan to combat the opioid crisis, and promised that he would target federal funds at improving access to treatment for opioid and other substance use disorders. The pandemic has complicated treatment for many people facing Substance Use Disorder, and because of the financial difficulties numerous community behavioral health organizations and drug treatment programs are facing, many of them seriously underfunded already, they will be unable to serve many of the country's most vulnerable individuals.

"We need to remember that before the pandemic there was an epidemic of opioid overdose deaths and stagnant funding for behavioral health initiatives," Harckham writes. "The only way to start mitigating this tragedy is with funding for direct payments to behavioral health organizations and treatment programs to ensure they can remain open and operating during

the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.”

The emergency supplemental funding for treatment providers would be similar to assistance already given to small businesses. Due to the pandemic and resulting economic crash, many patients have lost the ability to pay for their share of the costs of treatment. The funding would help stabilize the delivery of service to those who need it.

“At stake are the lives of our loved ones and neighbors,” Harckham concludes in his letter.