



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Bill Looks to Eliminate Disparities in Care for Substance Use Disorder Treatment

PETE HARCKHAM February 1, 2021

| ISSUE: **ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, HEALTH EQUITY**



*Albany, NY* – New legislation sponsored by State Senator Pete Harckham that looks to eliminate disparities in care for Substance Use Disorder treatment was passed today in the Senate as part of a package of nine bills that address healthcare inequities across the state.

Harckham's bill (S.679A) amends the state's mental hygiene law to establish a council for treatment equity within the state's Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) in

order to address substance use disorder treatment disparities amongst vulnerable populations across the state.

“There should be no hurdles or impediments for people with Substance Use Disorder when they need assistance—just sincere compassion and real help,” said Harckham, who chairs the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. “The new legislation that was passed will help ensure the best level of care is available to everyone in the state regardless of their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or socio-economic status. I appreciate my Senate colleagues’ support for this initiative because it will save lives here in New York.”

In the midst of the opioid crisis ravaging New York State, damaging disparities in the quality and access to healthcare continue to harm certain vulnerable populations, where the needs of people struggling with substance use disorder in these communities continue to go unmet.

The work of the newly created treatment equity council would focus on communities that have experienced injustices and disadvantages as a result of race or any other status, or on communities in which the non-white population is 40% or more.

Developing programs and policies for better access to care and treatment in these communities is vital. In addition to improved access and quality of care, Harckham stressed that cultural differences that guide medical and other decision-making, as well as language needs, have to be respected routinely. Fostering an increased awareness of the issues these underserved populations face can help bring positive change and better outcomes for those struggling with Substance Use Disorder for all New Yorkers.

The 13-member treatment equity council will be tasked with analyzing collected data to determine the causes of treatment disparities, implementing strategies to widen treatment

in vulnerable communities, conducting outreach programs regarding available services for people with Substance Use Disorder and reviewing laws that may be impacting the ability to achieve treatment equity.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S679A

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- 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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Establishes the council for treatment equity within the office of addiction services and supports

January 04, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Pete Harckham**

Do you support this bill?