



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham, Dem Senators Send Letter to Biden and Cuomo Calling for an Overdose State of Emergency

PETE HARCKHAM July 21, 2021

| ISSUE: **BATTLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC, ADDICTION & OVERDOSE PREVENTION, GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO, PRESIDENT BIDEN, SENATOR HARCKHAM**



*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and 28 Democratic members of the State Senate are sending a letter today to President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Governor Andrew M. Cuomo asking them to both declare a state of emergency in the United States and New York, respectively, to fight the overdose epidemic “that last year took more American lives than the combined fatalities in the Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars.”

“It is clear that the federal Government and the State of New York need to marshal every public health resource possible to stop the frightening increase in overdose deaths that are occurring every day in our

cities and villages,” the letter states. “Federal and state officials have to act with utmost urgency and work together to save the lives of our friends and neighbors here in New York and around the country.”

The letter from the state senators follows a report released last week by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that over 93,000 people in the U.S.—an average of about 250 people a day—died of a drug overdose in 2020. In comparison, this is four times the number lost last year to gun violence. Governor Cuomo recently declared a state of emergency regarding gun violence in New York, and President Biden convened a meeting of law enforcement and government officials to discuss the issue as well.

In their letter to Biden and Cuomo, the senators note that an “all-out effort” to attack the overdose crisis will require expanding access to evidence-based prevention, harm-reduction, treatment and recovery services, including supportive housing. Medication treatment upon demand, with new emergency rooms, correctional settings and crisis intervention centers, all fully staffed, will be needed as well.

Integrating evidence-based treatment of co-occurring disorders, ramping up education and prevention efforts, and ending barriers to treatment that disproportionately impact low income, minority and rural residents are also necessary, the senators write.

The concludes: “There is no time to lose—we simply cannot let this immense tragedy and human-made disaster persist. Please declare a state of emergency and do everything possible to stop this overdose epidemic.”

The list of signees includes Harckham and senators Gounardes, Thomas, Mannion, May, Hinchey, Sepúlveda, Krueger, Kaplan, Gaughran, Rivera, Persaud, Kennedy, Salazar, Cooney, Skoufis, Sanders, Comrie, Liu, Brooks, Brisport, Stavitsky, Brouk, Ramos, Bailey, Jackson, Serrano, Mayer and Biaggi.