



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Announces “Treatment with Dignity” Package of Legislation on International Recovery Day

PETE HARCKHAM September 30, 2021

| ISSUE: **BATTLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC, SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER, SENATOR PETE HARCKHAM**



Albany, NY – In recognition of International Recovery Day, New York State Senator Pete Harckham announced today the he has introduced a “Treatment with Dignity” package of legislation: four bills intended to ensure that residents with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) get the assistance they require—and with the respect they deserve. In addition, the legislation will help keep residents in treatment and recovery programs regardless of their ability to pay the costs.

“Too many people are forced to leave treatment programs for Substance Use Disorder because of various reasons, which, sadly, can often lead them to relapse and overdose,” said Harckham, chair of the Senate

Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. “Each of these new bills that I am sponsoring addresses a different problem that residents may face while on their road to recovery. The focus here is making sure individuals can access the treatment they need regardless of ability to pay, and that the treatment facilities themselves are supportive places focused on the addiction that an individual is seeking treatment for.”

One bill ([S.7350](#)) will require addiction treatment centers operated by the state’s Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) to provide services regardless of an individual’s ability to pay.

“A person’s willingness to get help, or the realization that help is necessary, can fade quickly, so financial impediments should not become a deterrent to lifesaving treatment,” said Harckham.

Another bill ([S.7349](#)) will require facilities that provide chemical dependence services to be constructed in a manner that ensures the privacy of individuals receiving treatment while they are bathing, sleeping, using the restrooms and receiving individual counseling services.

Harckham noted that when it comes to recovery, the atmosphere at a treatment facility and the comfort of its accommodations could be as important as the psychosocial therapies. Substance use treatment often involves medical treatment that may have unpleasant physical effects. Quality accommodations and amenities can motivate individuals to stay in treatment, maintain their dignity and experience the full benefits of therapy.

“The facilities that offer treatment should, at minimum, provide privacy to residents seeking help,” said Harckham.

Added Jeremy Klemanski, CEO and president of Helio Health, Inc., a Binghamton, NY, treatment provider, “As health service providers, we strive to meet people where they are to support their journey to a healthier place, and improving the spaces we do that work to better respect the people we serve is a win for everyone.”

The third bill ([S.7351](#)) will remove the requirement for treatment providers certified by OASAS to be tobacco-free. This change will encourage those using tobacco and suffering from substance use disorder to seek treatment for their immediately life-threatening substance use.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA), a federal agency, defines recovery as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Currently, OASAS requires treatment facilities to be tobacco-free. While the health risks associated with tobacco use are undeniable, it is crucial that support be afforded to individuals attempting to tackle SUD whether they are smokers or not.

“In an effort to appreciate how tough it is for people who are making the decision to take control over their lives, we need to foster policies that create a non-punitive environment for smokers in treatment settings,” said Harckham.

Ashley Livingston, co-chair of Friends of Recovery Warren & Washington, said, “In the face of 93,000 overdose deaths in 2020, I thank Senator Harckham for advancing meaningful proposals that will eliminate barriers for individuals struggling with addiction to get help and find their way to recovery.”

The final bill ([S.7352](#)) will modify the classification of SUD treatment under insurance law from “medical” to “clinical.” This change will allow treatment providers the flexibility to help resolve the individual's clinical needs while assisting in crisis stabilization, especially for those dealing with homelessness.

Individuals with SUD come from many different social and economic backgrounds. Oftentimes, due to their disorder many individuals are experiencing housing instability directly affecting their recovery. Studies have shown SUD is both a cause and a result of homelessness and because of this both issues need to be addressed simultaneously.

“Stable housing during and after treatment decreases the risk of relapse,” said Harckham. “Treatment providers need the flexibility to determine if someone should continue to be provided services on site while a housing option is secured. This legislation seeks to provide additional support to those in treatment by meeting clinical needs and assisting in crisis stabilization.”

Earlier this month, Harckham introduced a new bill that will require the state’s Department of Health (DOH) to publish an annual report detailing all registered opioid sales per annum in the state of New York. This report, which will help quantify the compulsory deposits that need to be made into the state’s Opioid Stewardship Fund, will be made available then to the public in machine-readable formats and on the DOH website.

Five bills relating to SUD and the opioid crisis that Harckham introduced and were passed by the State Legislature during its 2020-2021 session await the governor’s signature.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S7350

-
- 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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Relates to the payment for services at addiction treatment centers operated by the office of addiction services and supports

August 27, 2021

In Senate Committee [Alcoholism and Substance Abuse](#)

Sponsored by [Pete Harckham](#)

Do you support this bill?