



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Peter Oberacker

## Senator Oberacker Highlights Rural Concerns During Meeting of Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction, and Overdose Prevention

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**ALBANY, 10/20/21** -- State Senator Peter Oberacker (R/C-Schenevus) today took part in a meeting of the Senate Joint Task Force on Opioids, Addiction and Overdose Prevention to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on the overdose crisis.

Senator Peter Oberacker said, **“The heroin and opioid crisis is not new, however, the COVID pandemic has created additional challenges - particularly in the rural areas I represent. Individuals are struggling with addiction and mental health concerns, they are isolated, and we need to develop innovative solutions.”**

A recent CDC study has shown that over 93,000 overdose deaths occurred nationwide in 2020, a shocking 30 percent increase from the previous year.

**“Access to treatment has always been a significant roadblock and the hurdles are even steeper today. Transportation and technology shortcomings, lack of awareness and education, along with a shortage of long-term treatment facilities and providers are just a few of the concerns that must be addressed,”** added Senator Oberacker.

Doctor Joseph Sellers, Physician Executive for Bassett Medical Group, was among those who testified. Dr. Sellers practices Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Bassett Medical Center and Cobleskill Regional Hospital and also serves as President of the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY). As part of his testimony, Dr Sellers said, “The COVID-19 pandemic reverses a lot of progress we had made by exacerbating a host of medical conditions including addictions. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that people are drinking more and using more drugs.”

**“I want to make sure the state is working closely with local stakeholders to meet the unique needs of our rural communities. We can also need to provide law enforcement agencies with the resources needed to put drug kingpins behind bars and get dangerous illegal drugs off our streets. Bail reform laws, that have eliminated an entry point to treatment programs for many, must be amended as well,”** said Senator Oberacker.

Senator Oberacker serves as ranking member on the Senate Committee on Alcoholism & Substance Abuse and was also recently named to [the Senate Joint Task Force on Opioids, Addiction and Overdose Prevention](#).

**“Today’s hearing was a positive step. Now we need to take the testimony and develop policies and legislation that help people as we combat the heroin and opioid health crisis,”** concluded Senator Oberacker.