



Suffolk County Legislature

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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MEDIA ALERT

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Legislator Calarco To Host “Opiate Awareness Seminar” Event Educates Public on Warning Signs, Prevention and Treatment

Medford, NY – Legislator Rob Calarco will host an “Opiate Awareness Seminar” on October 2 at 7 PM at the Blue Ridge Community Center. He will be joined by Councilwoman Connie Keper, Patchogue-Medford Youth & Community Services, COPE Officers from the Suffolk County 6th Precinct, the Patchogue-Medford School District, Suffolk County EMS Services and the Suffolk County Youth Bureau.

In Suffolk County, deaths involving opiates have risen over 30% since 2007 and the appearance of one opiate in particular, oxycodone, has nearly doubled in the same period. According to the Suffolk County Medical Examiner, deaths due in-part to non-heroin opioid deaths rose by 70% between 2004 and 2011; in 2012 there were 214 opioid-related deaths.

“I have convened a panel of local experts so that the public can be better prepared to spot the warning signs and get their loved ones treatment if they succumb to this addiction,” stated Legislator Rob Calarco. A recent opioid-related death in the community prompted him to organize the seminar. “We can no longer ignore this issue and think it only affects small segments of our population. We are seeing young people and the Baby Boom generation suffering from this addiction and it crosses all economic strata. This issue affects all Suffolk County residents and I am looking forward to an informative session.”

Town of Brookhaven Councilwoman Connie Kepert, who represents part of the Medford Community, has also seen an increased rise in opioid deaths in her district. “I want to thank Legislator Rob Calarco for organizing this important seminar,” she stated. “As a retired public school teacher, I have seen first-hand the devastation opioid addiction can cause. I encourage the public to come to hear what this panel of experts on the front lines has to say.”

“I am looking forward to presenting with this panel of experts and educating the community about this very pertinent topic that is so prevalent in our community,” stated Shawn Hirst, Executive Director of the Youth and Community Services. “As a professional who lives, works and is raising a family here, I intend to educate the community, provide information and resources to the community regarding this issue.”

Opioid abuse and addiction has also had a severe financial impact upon local communities. Between 2004 -11 the rate of emergency room visits due to opiate use has increased 52%. Crimes involving theft to private and personal property by opioid abusers have increased and unemployment rates for abusers have risen as well. Additionally, there are enormous burdens on police, fire and emergency medical rescue services due to this epidemic.

“We are facing a crisis in Suffolk County,” stated Legislator Rob Calarco. “Opioid dependency destroys lives, destroys families and destroys communities. The financial toll and human costs caused by opioid use are huge and unless we act now we will lose this battle.”

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