

Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Sheldon Silver, Speaker • Steven Cymbrowitz, Chair

Summer 2012

Message from the Chair



Dear Friends:

As Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I am pleased to provide you with a legislative update on the Committee's activities from this past session. As Chairman, I made a series of visits to service providers across the state; held meetings with stakeholders in the field of addiction and problem gambling; and attended and participated in numerous events held to highlight important initiatives and address challenges faced by the chemical dependence community. These experiences over the past several months have collectively strengthened my resolve to advocate for the investment of resources in programs that have proven to be effective in reducing chemical dependence and problem gambling, as well as evidence-based prevention programs that aim to reduce the risk of individuals engaging in addictive behaviors. From both an economic and social standpoint, these services more than pay for themselves when you account for the lives saved, families reunited, and creation of productive, taxpaying citizens.

Difficult economic times perpetuated a significant deficit in our state that the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2012-2013 enacted budget eliminated. As a result, the Committee was able to secure modest yet critical resources for some of the State's most vulnerable populations. The Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) received funding that will allow the agency to provide additional supportive housing for women with children and veterans who are dealing with chemical dependency issues. As Chairman of the Committee, I will continue to campaign passionately for adequate access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services for all of our State's citizens who are struggling with addiction, as well as necessary assistance for their families.

Legislatively, the Committee had a very productive session, acting on several important pieces of legislation. As Chairman, one of my main priorities was the prevention and treatment of problem gambling. This was of particular importance because the process to amend the State Constitution in order to legalize non-tribal casino gaming in New York began this session. If this initiative becomes law, it is critical that we have a robust network of resources and services to address the needs of those who may be struggling with a gambling problem. The Committee also made major strides through the enacted budget by pushing for the establishment of the prescription pain medication awareness campaign. Several of the provisions included in this new campaign were major components of the legislation which the Committee advanced in SFY 2011-2012. The Committee will continue to develop and consider policies and initiatives designed to help all of our citizens impacted by addiction.

I look forward to working with all of you, including the Speaker of the Assembly, members of the Committee, my Assembly colleagues, the chemical dependence and problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery communities, and other stakeholders, to improve the lives of New Yorkers through a comprehensive and efficient system of addiction services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Cymbrowitz".

Steven H. Cymbrowitz
Chairman, Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Facilitates Roundtable with the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez and the Orthodox Jewish Community

On May 3, 2012, Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz, Chairman of the Assembly's Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee, brought Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to Midwood, Brooklyn for a roundtable on alcohol and drug abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community. Over twenty Rabbis, doctors, psychologists, social workers and program directors with experience treating local residents with alcohol and drug abuse issues within the Orthodox Jewish community participated in the forum held in the Young Israel of Midwood.

At the roundtable the Commissioner was able to hear firsthand about the community's concerns and challenges in addressing the alcoholism and drug abuse problem, particularly amongst the youth. The roundtable was the second on this topic in the community and was designed to foster a discussion that will help to define the nature and scope of the problem, and to identify and implement effective interventions within the community.



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz listens to a presentation at a town hall meeting he sponsored in conjunction with Dynamic Youth Community, a substance abuse treatment program in Brooklyn. The town hall meeting was designed to reach the Russian-speaking population in the community, and provide information on education, prevention and treatment for substance abuse.



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz makes a statement at the roundtable as New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez and members and treatment professionals of the Orthodox Jewish Community look on.

The New York State Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Provides the Framework for Policy to Prevent Prescription Drug Abuse

Prescription drug abuse has impacted millions of individuals and families both in New York State and across the nation. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows that nearly one-third of people aged 12 and over who used drugs for the first time in 2009 began by using a prescription drug non-medically. The Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse identified this issue as critically important and convened public forums where stakeholders, including treatment professionals, law enforcement officials, and health care providers discussed policies and initiatives that could help to reduce the addiction to prescription medications and the public health costs associated with the abuse of these drugs.

On September 10th, 2009, the Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, in conjunction with the Assembly Committee on Health, convened a public hearing to assess the needs of persons who abuse prescription drugs; determine whether the services available to such persons meet their needs; and identify what actions New York State needs to take to improve prevention and treatment services.

On August 9th, 2011, the Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse held a roundtable discussion on

Prescription Drug Abuse among Adolescents and Young Adults. Through this roundtable, the Committee heard the key components necessary to battle this growing public health crisis. These include: increasing education for physicians and other health care providers regarding the abuse of prescription drugs, raising the awareness of the general public, and targeting parents and youth with the message of how dangerous and harmful the consequences of prescription drug abuse can be.

In response to the information the Committee received, Chairman Cymbrowitz introduced the following legislation which aimed to prevent the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs:

A.7805 would require the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) in consultation with the Department of Health (DOH) to develop a prescription drug awareness campaign regarding the dangers of misuse and abuse of prescription drugs.

A.7807 would mandate OASAS in consultation with the Commissioner of DOH, to develop educational materials that would assist health care providers in recognizing the symptoms of prescription drug abuse; provide evidence-

The Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Developed and Advanced Significant Legislation this Session

Qualifications of Members of the New York State Gaming Commission (A.10023; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would require that at least one of the seven board members of the New York State Gaming Commission have significant experience in the prevention and treatment of compulsive gambling. This legislation would enable the Commission to promote responsible gaming practices.

Access to Problem Gambling Services (A.10024; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would require gambling facilities to post signs describing where and how to get help with compulsive gambling in a prominent manner within reasonable proximity to every exit and entrance of a gambling facility. This bill would help raise awareness of how to access supports and services for problem gambling by increasing the visibility of signs posted in gaming facilities.

Compulsive Gambling Assistance (A.10025-A; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would enhance New York State's self exclusion provisions by requiring OASAS in collaboration with the New York State Gaming Commission to develop educational materials and programs for individuals that choose to exclude themselves from gaming facilities. This bill would increase awareness of compulsive gambling treatment resources for individuals who voluntarily self exclude.

Legislative Taskforce on Problem Gambling (A.10054-A; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would establish the New York State Legislative Task Force on Responsible Gaming which would provide recommendations to the New York State Gaming Commission and each of the Commission's divisions on issues related to the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

Problem Gambling Youth Curriculum (A.2425-C; Rivera, P.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would require the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) in consultation with the State Education Department (SED) to develop curriculum for a course of instruction in adolescent problem gambling which may be provided at the option of any

school in grades 4-12. The curriculum would be made available on the websites of OASAS and SED. A problem gambling curriculum would provide teachers with an important tool to educate students on problem gambling and help to deter such behavior before it starts.

Prescription Drug Disposal (A.9621; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would increase public awareness on the proper disposal of prescription drugs by requiring OASAS in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to post on its website information related to conducting a pharmaceutical collection event. It would also allow OASAS to assist DEC in the development of a public information program on the proper disposal of drugs and how to access drug disposal sites.

Implementing Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Programs (A.7804; Cymbrowitz, S.; Passed the Assembly) This legislation would support the expansion of the Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) program beyond hospital emergency rooms to primary health care settings by requiring OASAS to develop SBIRT training materials for health care providers and qualified health professionals.

Adequacy of Veterans' Treatment Programs (A.7806; Cymbrowitz, S.) This legislation would require OASAS to collaborate with the Division of Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Mental Health to evaluate the adequacy of chemical dependence programs for veterans as well as programs for veterans with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues.

Chemical Dependence Patient Bill of Rights (A.48; Ortiz, F.) This legislation would require that those patients who are undergoing treatment for chemical dependency are informed of their rights and the essential protections they are entitled to under the law. Some of these rights and protections include: being fully informed of the proposed treatment, including its adverse effects; having confidentiality in treatment and access to personal and treatment records; reporting grievances regarding services to any staff of the facility; and the right to civil and religious liberties.

Addressing Problem Gambling a Top Priority for the Committee and Chairman Cymbrowitz

The gambling market in New York continues to evolve. In the recent enacted budget, the New York State Gaming Commission was established, giving the state a single oversight body for its gaming industry. In addition, the legislature approved the first passage of a constitutional amendment which marks the initial step towards ratifying such an amendment in order to allow for non-tribal casino gaming within our state's borders.

The Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, under the guidance and leadership of Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, adopted a proactive approach by executing a series of measures which aimed to raise awareness among the members of the legislature and the general public on the risks associated with problem gambling. The Committee also promoted, developed, and advanced legislation to enhance available programs and supports related to problem gambling assistance.

By the end of session, as a result of numerous meetings and discussions with stakeholders from the compulsive gambling prevention community, and the gaming industry, and support the Chairman garnered from his colleagues in the Assembly Majority, the Committee was able to advance a significant package of problem gambling legislation which passed the Assembly. This package was crafted to help mitigate the risks associated with problem gambling; enable the state to develop policies and procedures that will promote responsible gambling in all its gaming facilities; and increase access to, and awareness of available supports and services.



Chairman Steven Cymbrowitz presents an adopted resolution to Jim Maney, Executive Director of the New York Council on Problem Gambling. The resolution memorialized Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim March 11th – March 17th, 2012 as Problem Gambling Awareness Week in New York State.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Reaches Out to Substance Abuse Community on Behalf of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee

New York Society of Addiction Medicine Conference (NYSAM) Invites Assemblyman Cymbrowitz to Speak on Prescription Drug Abuse

Chairman Steven Cymbrowitz attended a conference that was hosted by NYSAM. The conference was focused on identifying ways to reduce the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. In his remarks, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz highlighted that during his tenure as Chairman, a priority of the Committee has been to develop legislation that will increase educational opportunities for health care providers and raise awareness of the general public about the risks and consequences of prescription drug abuse.



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz makes a point to the members of the Coalition for Community Services at their Legislative Reception.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Speaks at the Coalition for Community Services Legislative Reception

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz was honored to address the members of the Coalition for Community Services, which has been serving the communities of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Fallsburg, and Western New York for over 30 years. The reception provided an opportunity for young people and adults to share their personal stories of treatment and recovery and be recognized for their successes in addressing their issues with addiction. Other speakers included Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Mental Health.



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz visited The Lighthouse, Kingsborough Community College's substance abuse and prevention program, which is located in his district, to congratulate its staff on their many successes. This 12-year-old multi-modality program is focused on maintaining the campus' drug-free environment. It provides education and information, referrals to treatment and counseling, and positive alternatives to negative behavior for the school's students, professional and support staff, as well as to their families. Pictured with Assemblyman Cymbrowitz are (L-R) the Lighthouse's Assistant Director, Pearl Siegelman, Office Manager, Patricia Hayes and Director Michael Geller.

Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz Welcomes Friends of Recovery-New York (FOR-NY) to Albany

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz had the privilege of speaking at the FOR-NY 2012 Advocacy Day. This annual event provided an opportunity for individuals to share their stories of recovery. Later in the day, FOR-NY, stakeholders and advocates from the recovery community met with members of the legislature to express the importance of ensuring that sufficient resources are available for chemical dependence prevention, treatment, and recovery services in the State of New York.



Assemblyman Cymbrowitz presents at the Annual Friends of Recovery-New York (FOR-NY) Advocacy Day.

New York State Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers (ASAP) Presents Public Service Award to Chairman Steven Cymbrowitz

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, at the 13th annual ASAP conference, was recognized for his leadership and his commitment to supporting quality chemical dependence programs and services across the state.

The theme of this year's conference was "Behavioral Health Care in Transition." It provided a forum for substance abuse professionals to discuss challenges, explore new solutions and discuss effective strategies that address common issues in substance abuse prevention and treatment.

Framework

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based screening instruments to such health care providers; and identify resources that would be provided to health care providers for the purpose of referring a patient to treatment.

Even though these pieces of legislation did not become law, the Committee's hard work finally paid off when the SFY 2012-2013 Enacted Budget established the prescription pain medication awareness campaign. The Committee was pleased that the campaign included major provisions of the legislation that Assemblyman Cymbrowitz sponsored. While New York State took an important first step in addressing this serious problem, there remains much work to be done. The Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse will continue to make prescription drug abuse one of its main priorities until there is a comprehensive approach in place that adequately addresses prevention and treatment needs statewide.