

New Jersey State Legislative Update

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As most know by now, the testing standards for ASCs have been revised to conform to the CDC standards due to the improvement in the COVID19 statistics. Stay tuned as we expect to hear about revised standards for physician's offices in the very near future.

My work in Trenton is ongoing and very much in focus for this last week of the spring legislative session. The Budget is expected to be approved very soon, and I will produce a full recap of all pertinent legislative activity in a Special Legislative Update as soon as the sessions conclude for the summer.

Late last week, Governor Murphy announced that the state has reached its goal of 4.7 million fully vaccinated residents. Despite reaching that goal, the statewide vaccination effort will be ongoing.

Senate Passes Opioid Antidote Accessibility Package

In response to the state's deadly opioid epidemic, yesterday the Senate passed five bills which would increase access to opioid antidotes and provide support for those struggling with addiction.

The first bill, S3491, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Joseph Lagana, would revise the requirements to obtain and administer opioid antidotes in response to a suspected overdose. Specifically, the bill would revise the "Overdose Prevention Act," to permit any person to obtain, administer, and distribute opioid antidotes to others, regardless of whether the person is acting in a private or professional capacity.

A second bill, S3493, sponsored by Senator Vitale, would permit the expungement of a possession or distribution of a hypodermic syringe or needle offense.

Under current law, expungement is prohibited when the person has had a previous criminal conviction expunged, but certain exceptions exist including when the person is seeking the expungement of a municipal ordinance violation or the expungement of records for an arrest not resulting in conviction. This bill would add possession or distribution of hypodermic syringes or needles to the list of exceptions and decriminalize possession or distribution of hypodermic syringes or needles.

A third bill, S3800, sponsored by Senator Dawn Addiego, would require health benefits carriers and State programs to provide coverage for opioid antidotes, including naloxone, without imposing prior authorization requirements.

Specifically, the bill would be for opioid antidotes that are either prescribed or administered to individuals by authorized licensed medical practitioners or licensed pharmacists, under a standing order to allow pharmacists to dispense opioid antidotes to any person without an individual prescription.

A fourth bill, S3803, sponsored by Senator Vitale, would permit paramedics to administer buprenorphine.

Under the bill, paramedics may administer the drug to an individual following the emergent administration of an opioid antidote to the individual provided that the paramedic is:

- * providing emergency medical services through a program registered with the United States Attorney General;
- * administering the drug consistent with requirements under federal law; and
- * has completed comprehensive training and competency assessments regarding which specific medical conditions necessitate the administration of buprenorphine, including, dosage requirements and the required medical documentation following its administration.

The final bill, S3867, sponsored by Senators Addiego and Troy Singleton, would dedicate all current and future Opioid Settlement dollars solely to addiction services. The bill would require that any money that has already been received and any additional opioid settlement monies be placed in a New Jersey State Treasury 'Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund.' This fund would be dedicated solely to supplementing substance use disorder prevention and treatment programs and services in the State.

The bills have been approved by both Houses and are now on the Governor's Desk.