

# **Durbin introduces legislation to prevent prescription opioid addiction**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today introduced comprehensive legislation to combat the volume of addictive painkillers on the market and improve prescribing practices. The Addiction Prevention and Responsible Opioid Practices Act (A-PROP Act) would curb the number of opioids flooding the market, increase accountability to ensure responsible prescribing practices, and support prevention efforts to reduce drug diversion and addiction. U.S. Representative Matt Cartwright (D-PA) will introduce its companion bill in the House of Representatives.

**“The alarming increase in heroin and opioid overdose deaths in Illinois and across the country is unacceptable. Drug addiction treatment is vital, but we must also work upstream to prevent people from becoming addicted in the first place,” said Senator Durbin. “This means holding drug companies accountable for misleading doctors about the risks associated with opioid painkillers and improving federal oversight of new drugs trying to enter the market. It requires educating doctors, dentists, and pharmacists about safe prescribing practices and enhancing prescription monitoring systems. Tackling this crisis will require a coordinated effort from Congress, health care professionals, and drug companies, and we must all act immediately to prevent this epidemic from spiraling further out of control.”**

**“The crisis of increased heroin and prescription drug abuse across America is tearing apart families and devastating our communities. This legislation is a significant step forward in the federal response to this crisis, and I look forward to working with Senator Durbin to ensure that we’re doing all that we can to fight the problem,” said Congressman Cartwright.**

Illinois experienced 1,652 overdose deaths in 2014 – a nearly 30 percent increase since 2010. Deaths from prescription opioids—drugs like oxycodone and hydrocodone – have quadrupled since 1999, and four out of five new heroin users started out by misusing prescription opioids. In 2014, health care providers in the United States wrote 245 million prescriptions for painkillers, enough for every adult American to have a month’s supply of pills.

Durbin has introduced several pieces of legislation to expand treatment for heroin addiction and increase access to drug prevention programs that have been proven to save lives. Today’s legislation would build upon these initiatives to help prevent addiction before it starts. A-PROP would provide enhanced oversight and new tools that are needed to reduce exposure to opioids in the first place. Specifically, the bill would do the following:

- Improve FDA oversight of new opioids coming to market and require recommendations on continuing education for prescribers;
- Strengthen the DEA’s authority to limit the number of addictive painkillers available in the United States every year;
- Require continuing education for medical professionals who prescribe longer-term use of painkillers;
- Encourage medical schools to responsibly educate future doctors;

- Strengthen prescription drug monitoring systems to prevent over-prescribing and expand information sharing to identify individuals who may need help;
- Remove unintended financial incentives to over-prescribe opioids;
- Examine expansion of Medicare coverage for evidence-based alternatives to opioid treatments; and
- Ensure that drug manufacturers are responsible stewards of their products by having them establish a national drug disposal program and help fund substance abuse treatment programs.