

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Attorney General Racine Testifies in Support of ‘Opioid Overdose Prevention Amendment Act of 2016’

AG Backs Expanding Access to Life-Saving Medication, Recommends Additional Policy Solutions

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Yesterday, Attorney General Karl A. Racine testified before the D.C. Council’s Committee on Health and Human Services in support of Bill 21-602, the “Substance Abuse and Opioid Overdose Prevention Amendment Act of 2016.” This legislation will make lifesaving medications to counteract heroin and opioid overdoses more readily available.

The bill will enable doctors and pharmacists to prescribe, dispense and distribute the medication (most commonly known by the names Naloxone and Narcan) for use by people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, opioid-related overdoses as well as to their family members, friends, and others who are in a position to assist them.

“This legislation can save lives in the District by implementing evidence-based solutions that can help prevent overdose deaths from heroin and prescription drugs,” said Attorney General Racine. **“It is my duty as Attorney General to sound the alarm over the nationwide opioid epidemic, which threatens the safety of District residents, and support efforts to combat this plague.”**

According to the D.C. Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, in 2015, 99 people died from an opioid-related overdose in the District – representing a 48 percent increase from the number of deaths in 2014. Moreover, this number has been rising every year since 2011. To fight this trend and other new drug-related problems, the [Office of the Attorney General \(OAG\) formed the Emerging Drug Trends Task Force](#) last year. The Task Force is charged with researching, analyzing, and developing strategies to combat the dangers posed to our community by emerging drug trends such as opioid addiction and new psychoactive substances like synthetic

cannabinoids. OAG is also part of Northeast & Mid-Atlantic Heroin Task Force, which fosters collaboration across multiple state law enforcement agencies.

In prepared remarks, Attorney General Racine also recommended additional policy solutions that could help combat this opioid overdose epidemic:

- Require physicians and pharmacists to review patient history as part of the District’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (“PDMP”) to reduce “doctor shopping” (the practice of going to multiple physicians to prescribe painkillers) and “pill shopping.” Such prescription monitoring programs have been very successful in other jurisdictions.
- Create a drug take-back program. The OAG Task Force is exploring partnerships with law enforcement agencies to set up a robust prescription drug take-back program throughout the District to provide a safe return and later destruction of these drugs, which might potentially land on the streets.
- Collaborate with District officials, agencies and communities to increase public awareness and help identify signs of heroin and opioid abuse in an effort to work jointly on multi-disciplinary prevention efforts.

Attorney General Racine thanked Ward 7 Councilmember and Committee on Health and Human Services Chair Yvette Alexander, who introduced the bill along with Councilmembers Charles Allen (Ward 6), David Grosso (At-Large), Mary Cheh (Ward 3), and Elissa Silverman (At-Large). **“Many thanks to these Councilmembers for their leadership on this important issue,”** he said.

Attorney General Racine’s final testimony as prepared for delivery is attached.

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