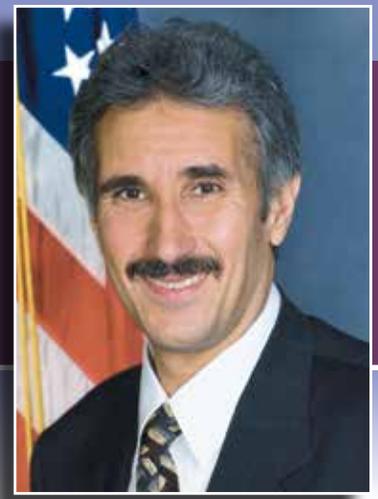


Rep. Chris

# Sainato

## Health Care Report



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### Dear Health Care Professional,

As your State Representative, I would like to thank you for your dedication toward the well-being and health of our citizens.

This newsletter is intended to inform medical professionals about legislation that has been introduced or passed in Harrisburg.

In this issue, I'll also tell you about the House Democratic Policy Committee hearings I've attended this year with regard to health insurance and making sure our families have the resources needed to make smart decisions when it comes to eating right.

Additionally, because the opioid crisis has ravaged our district and the commonwealth, I wanted to update you on what we've been doing in order to help those battling addictions; funding that is available to combat the crisis; and how medical patients can opt out of taking any medication associated with opioids.

Once again, thank you for your continued medical expertise and service to our community.

Rep. Chris Sainato



### Quality health care should be affordable

The House Democratic Policy Committee held a hearing on affordable health care April 4 at King's College in Wilkes-Barre. The hearing was one of several meetings in which legislators discussed ways we can improve our health care system across the commonwealth.

It is imperative that we keep quality health care affordable to all Pennsylvanians. We have to find ways to provide affordable health care while still providing the best quality. The expansion of Medicaid has helped many of our hospitals become more viable. Additionally, telemedicine is also helping to cut costs, and offers better care with the technology that we are currently using.

As you know, telemedicine is a two-way, real-time interactive communication between the patient and the physician or practitioner at a distant site. It's been stated that using audio and video equipment has been extremely cost efficient for those working in the medical profession.

Senate Bill 780, if passed, would provide guidelines outlining who can use the telemedicine services, and provide clarity around insurance company reimbursements for those services. Payments would be established between the provider and insurer. The legislation was referred to the House Professional Licensure Committee.

Overall, we want a great health care system in Pennsylvania, but it needs expansion. Those who testified provided practical suggestions and we want to come up with solutions that are going to give our residents the best health care in the world.



I, joined by Rep. Mark Longiotti, believe quality and affordable health care should be an option for all Pennsylvanians. It was great to hear from health care professionals.

## 2018-19 budget includes money to continue to fight opioids

Last month, the House and Senate passed a \$718 million, bipartisan-supported increase in General Fund expenditures in this year's state budget. I am happy to report that the budget includes money for continued support in fighting Pennsylvania's heroin and opioid abuse epidemic.

### Here is a breakdown of the money allotted to fight the opioid epidemic:

- Approximately \$4.5 million has been appropriated in new funding for an initiative to provide home visitation services to nearly 800 families affected by substance use disorder.
- The budget allows current programs to be maintained – including grants to single county authorities, 45 statewide Centers of Excellence, and the prescription drug monitoring program within the Department of Health and Human Services.
- \$2 million in grants will be used via the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to establish or expand drug courts.

## Medical form to allow patients to refuse opioids now available

A two-page form that lets patients refuse opioid therapy has recently been made available through the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Although the measure became law in 2016, it took a while for the Health Department to create, approve and make the form available.

Senate Bill 1367, which became Act 125 of 2016, indicates to all prescribers, practitioners and health care facilities that a patient has opted not to be administered an opioid drug or offered a prescription for an opioid drug that does not have abuse-deterrent properties.

The form is known as the Pennsylvania Patient Non-Opioid Directive. It permits patients to not take any form of treatment with opioids (Oxycodone, Vicodin or morphine) by checking a box, and is valid for all medical and dental care.



I want to thank the American Red Cross for allowing me to speak during American Red Cross Day at the Capitol. Donating blood helps save lives!

## Battling the opioid crisis

In January, a statewide emergency was declared in order to deal with the opioid and heroin crisis. In Pennsylvania, we are working hard to understand and fight the scourge of opioid prescription drug abuse, but much more needs to be done.

Most recently, I co-sponsored H.B. 1987, which would limit the use of fentanyl, an extremely powerful opioid used as pain medication, until the use of opioids and heroin declines.

Ultimately, this bill would restrict the use of fentanyl to palliative care, medical emergencies, surgical procedures and cancer patients, and would amend the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act. The bill passed the House in June and moved to the Senate for full consideration.

### OTHER OPIOID-RELATED LEGISLATION INCLUDES:

**S.B. 978** – This Opioid Epidemic/Drug Disposal after Hospice Care bill changed the law to allow hospice workers to dispose of the patient's pharmaceutical controlled substances. Currently, a member of the hospice patient's household may dispose of a patient's pharmaceutical controlled substances, but the home hospice provider cannot do so unless otherwise authorized by state law to dispose of the decedent's personal property. The bill was signed into law on June 28 as Act 69 of 2018.

**H.B. 1539** – Would allow grandparents to be loving, supporting caregivers without having to contend with unnecessary legal and monetary struggles. The bill would protect the rights of the parents, while at the same time provide a way for grandparents to obtain temporary guardianship and the legal right to make basic, parental decisions, including enrolling a child in school or taking them to the doctor. The bill passed the House and is now in the Senate.

**H.B. 17** – Clarifies that a parent or guardian may give consent to drug or alcohol addiction treatment on behalf of a minor child. The bill was signed into law on June 28 as Act 47 of 2018.

**H.B. 353** – Would require the electronic prescribing of opioid medications as a means to prevent diversion due to handwritten prescriptions. The bill has been presented to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

**H.B. 1043** – Would provide for registration and regulation of pain management clinics to help prevent the diversion, misuse and abuse of controlled substances. The bill has been presented to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

**H.B. 713** – Would provide involuntary emergency examination and treatment for individuals with substance use disorder who have overdosed. The bill was presented to the House Appropriations Committee.

## Help for suicide prevention

Unfortunately this year, we've heard of so many people taking their own lives. In Pennsylvania, suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup>-leading cause of death, with an average of one person dying every four hours, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Nationally, suicide rates are 13 per 100,000 of the population, but in the commonwealth, the rate is at 14. Two years ago, a new law was enacted requiring licensees of the State Board of Social Workers to complete one hour of continuing education in the assessment, treatment and management of suicide risks as a portion of the total continuing education required for license renewal.

The legislation covers psychologists, social workers, therapists and counselors. It doesn't increase the

hours of training, it just requires one of the hours to be suicide prevention training. It's important to make sure our professionals have the skills to deal with suicide when they need to intervene or console during a difficult situation.

Several resources are available to anyone who may be suicidal. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is (800) 273-8255.



## Legislation would help our emergency personnel should they face a crisis

A current bipartisan bill introduced in the House would create a Mental Wellness and Stress Management program for Pennsylvania's first responders. I co-sponsored this legislation because I believe in helping our emergency personnel who fearlessly help our communities in times of distress.

This legislation would establish a mental wellness and stress management protocol within the state's Department of Health to protect EMS workers living with post-traumatic stress and/or brain injuries. Ultimately, they would be offered a peer-to-peer support program, toll-free helpline, a Critical Incident Stress Management Program and trauma awareness training. The bill also would increase fines to the Emergency Medical Services Operation Fund.

Due to the demands of a high-risk job, some emergency responders who suffer from depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and lack of sleep don't seek the help that they need. As your State Representative, I will do all I can to support our first responders. This bill has been referred to the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, where I serve as Democratic chairman.

## Combatting Lyme disease

As most of you know, for three straight years Pennsylvania has led the nation in confirmed cases of Lyme disease and for the first time deer ticks have been found in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, according to the state Health Department.



In an effort to address this issue, the Health Department launched "Don't Let a Tick Make You Sick." This campaign aims at raising awareness around the disease and created a task force. Additionally, H.R. 761 was introduced, which would urge the Federal Government to allocate funds for Lyme disease. The resolution was voted out of the House Health Committee.

According to statistics from 2016, Pennsylvania had approximately 12,200 cases of Lyme disease, which is about 40 percent of the nation's cases.

As you know, it's important to remind individuals to use insect repellent with DEET, and quickly remove any ticks, along with showering after exposure, especially during the summer. Transmitted through a bite, the disease can be treated with antibiotics if detected early.

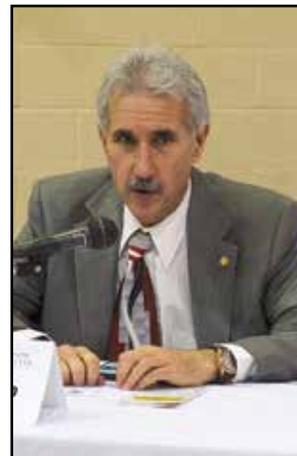
If untreated, the disease can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system. Symptoms of untreated cases may include migratory pain or arthritis, impaired motor and sensory skills and an enlarged heart.

For more information, visit [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov).

## HEALTHY FOODS



Access to healthy food should be available in communities across the commonwealth. It was my pleasure to engage in dialogue to discuss ways we can improve access to healthy food options and dairy in communities across the state.



I participated in a Policy Committee hearing regarding healthy foods for our communities. Access to healthier foods reduces the risk of certain diseases, which makes it easier for our health practitioners to take care of the public.



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## Inside:

- Affordable Health Care
- The Opioid Crisis
- Suicide Prevention
- Combatting Lyme Disease

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## Health Legislative Update

As your State Representative, it is my duty to keep you informed of what is happening in Harrisburg. I'd like to update you on what is occurring at the Capitol on the health front.

**Below is a list of health-related bills and where they currently stand:**

- **H.B. 1805** – Would create a Certified Surgical Technologists standard for newly practicing surgical technologists and require them to meet a minimum threshold competency requirement to prevent surgical site infections, protect patients and save lives. The bill is currently before the House Health Committee.
- **H.B. 562** – Would increase the eligibility for breast and cervical cancer screenings through the Department of Health's "Healthy Women Program." The bill is currently before the House Rules Committee.
- **H.B. 2135** – Would allow the State Board of Nursing to approve graduates of foreign professional nursing education programs to sit for the RN licensure examination, provided such programs are determined to be equivalent to what is required in the commonwealth. The bill is currently before the House Professional Licensure Committee.
- **S.B. 530** – Updates the licensure requirements and scope of practice for clinical social work. Two years ago, the Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Act was passed. The goal of this legislation is to update the requirements to provide better treatment for individuals who need the services of a clinical social worker; to clarify who may provide the services; and to define who may call themselves a licensed clinical social worker. The bill was signed into law on June 29 as Act 76 of 2018.
- **H.B. 2042** – Would protect the rights of professionals with mental health disabilities by preventing licensing boards from investigating a licensed professional merely on the basis of that professional's present or past mental capacity. The bill is currently before the House Professional Licensure Committee.
- **S.B. 892** – This act amended the Chiropractic Practice Act and allows for an exemption to allow chiropractic interns and students to perform chiropractic activities under the supervision of a licensee, instructor or supervisor. The bill was signed into law on June 28 as Act 67 of 2018.
- **S.B. 25** – Would modernize the Professional Nursing Law for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses by expanding access to high-quality health care by removing archaic restrictions on APRNs that no longer reflect modern medicine and the delivery of health care. The bill is currently before the House Professional Licensure Committee.