



**U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer**  
**Fighting for New York**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**SCHUMER: AFTER MORE THAN 500 OPIOID-RELATED DEATHS SINCE 2021 IN ERIE COUNTY ALONE, SCHUMER SEEKS \$3.2 BILLION INCREASE IN FED FUNDS TO STRENGTHEN CRITICAL PREVENTION, TREATMENT & RECOVERY EFFORTS, BOOST LAW ENFORCEMENT TO STOP DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND SAVE LIVES**

*Earlier This Year Feds Issued Dire Warnings About New Dangerous “Rainbow” Fentanyl*

*Opioid Overdoses – Fueled By Fentanyl – Killed Or Likely Killed 539 Erie County Residents Since 2021; Pandemic Took A Toll That Will Take Years To Overcome Without Right Amount Of Dollars & Action By Feds; Local Law Enforcement And Recovery Support Groups Cannot Do This Alone*

*With Dangerous New “Rainbow” Fentanyl Variety Found In Nearby Monroe County – Schumer Is Pushing To Supercharge Fed Funds To Hone In On More Localities With Specific Needs, Like Buffalo and Western New York And Bolster Prevention, Treatment, & Addiction Recovery Efforts*

Following a rare public warning from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer launched and detailed his push to beat back “Rainbow Fentanyl,” which is the latest attempt by drug-traffickers in peddling this deadly drug. Schumer is making a national funding push to combat the opioid crisis by increasing support by over \$3.2 billion dollars as part of the must-pass end of the year budget vote. Schumer said that fatal overdoses in Erie County have been on the rise since the pandemic began. Opioid overdoses accounted for 286 deaths in 2021. In 2022, there have been 145 confirmed opioid deaths so far, with another 108-suspected opioid deaths, marking 539 opioid-related deaths since January 2021. Now with this new fentanyl variety, even being found trafficked in Lego toy boxes in New York, Schumer said this funding is needed to stop drug dealers in their tracks and importantly give local community support groups the tools they need for prevention, treatment and recovery.

“Ask cops, doctors, mental health professionals, community leaders, families--really anyone with the right vantage--about one of the biggest health threats today and they'll say opioids, and in particular, fentanyl,” **said Senator Schumer.** “And now, drug-traffickers and dealers are doubling down on this very dangerous drug, and giving it the morbid moniker of ‘rainbow’. The data shows that Western New York is on the front line of the opioid scourge, and we cannot let this new variety of fentanyl continue to persist and wave of overdoses worsened by the pandemic.”

**Schumer added,** “We need an all-of-the-above approach: more interdiction, prevention, treatment and recovery, to fight the flow of drugs, and more effectively assist those who are suffering from addiction. That is why I am pushing for an over \$3.2 billion increase to treat the opioid epidemic like the public health crisis that it is. Including \$290 million nationally via special teams called ‘Overdose Response Strategy Teams,’ who can help combat this latest sick fentanyl trafficking ploy.”

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the CDC, the Overdose Response Strategy Team (ORS), which Schumer’s plan aims to boost with \$290 million, is collaboration between public health and public safety, created to help local communities reduce drug overdoses and save lives by sharing timely data, pertinent intelligence and evidence-based and innovative strategies. The ORS is implemented by teams made up of Drug Intelligence Officers (DIO) and Public Health Analysts, who work together on drug overdose issues within and across sectors, states, and territories. By sharing information across sectors, the ORS is growing the body of evidence related to early warning signs and prevention strategies. In New York, our DIOs are part of our HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Task Force network which includes Erie County. HIDTA works with local communities to assess the drug trafficking threat in its defined area, develops a strategy to address that threat, designs initiatives to implement the strategy, proposes funding needed to carry out the initiatives. Erie County specifically, based on its proximity to the Northern Border, prominent rail lines, and numerous high-volume highways, has been designated as a HIDTA since the program came into existence and helps fund programs like the Opioid Epidemic Task Force.

Schumer said, overall, adding \$3.2 billion more to the National Drug Control Strategy would boost total funding to \$42.5 billion. He said that, with the overall boost in funding, Erie County would be able to receive more funds to help combat the pandemic-fueled increases in opioid addiction. Examples of funding streams that Western NY organizations have relied on which would be boosted under this plan include:

- **\$553M for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) Expansion Grant program.** This funding aids programs at organizations like BestSelf Behavioral Health, who maintain an outpatient clinic for recovering addicts, as well as several different programs for those still struggling with addiction.
- **\$106M for The Drug-Free Communities Support Program.** The DFC Program funds community based coalitions across the country, including the West Side Youth Development Center, which grew from the Center for Health and Social Research at SUNY Buffalo State.
- **\$2B for the State Opioid Response Grants (SOR) program,** which funds several programs in Western New York, specifically Erie County’s opioid response initiative.

An overview of President Biden’s proposed increase in funding to combat the opioid crisis can be found [here](#).

This latest push builds on Schumer’s work negotiating the American Rescue Plan, which already included nearly \$4 billion for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Use And Mental

Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to ramp up critical mental health and substance use disorder treatment and services in our communities.

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