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*** * PRESS RELEASE * ***

Cities of Albany, Plattsburgh, Schenectady and Troy Sue Pharmaceutical Companies Over Opioid Epidemic

Today the cities of Albany, Plattsburgh, Schenectady and Troy filed lawsuits against the manufacturers and distributors of opioid painkillers alleging that the companies misled health care providers about the addiction risks associated with prescribing opioids and failed to control or report suspicious orders of opioids that have flooded the communities and devastated families. The lawsuits allege that the drug companies are responsible for creating a public nuisance and seek to abate the epidemic and recoup costs expended by the municipalities.

Over the last decade, the rate of opiate abuse and overdose incidents has risen to epidemic proportions. Last year alone in the United States, more than 2.1 million people were found to have an opioid disorder, and in the previous two years, more than 42,000 people died from overdosing on opioids. Statistics related to opiate addiction, overdoses, and deaths in the upstate cities mirror if not exceed the national averages.

The opioid crisis has placed significant financial strain on local taxpayer funded municipal budgets. The complaints allege that the cities have incurred substantial economic, administrative and social costs relating to fighting opioid addiction and abuse, including emergency first responder costs, law enforcement costs, criminal justice costs, victimization costs, lost productivity costs, health care costs, and education and prevention program costs among others.

The lawsuits, which were filed by the Albany law firm Dreyer Boyajian LaMarche Safranko PLLC on behalf of the cities in the state supreme courts for Albany, Clinton, Schenectady and Rensselaer counties, name as defendants Purdue, Teva Pharmaceuticals, Cephalon, Johnson & Johnson, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Endo, Pharmaceuticals, McKesson, Cardinal Health, and AmerisourceBergen Drug Corporation. The cities join counties throughout the state who have brought lawsuits seeking to hold drug companies accountable for their fraudulent and deceptive conduct in the aggressive marketing, sale and distribution of prescription opioids.

The complaints allege that the drugmakers knowingly misrepresented the truth about prescription opioids to doctors and patients in order to increase sales and profit, including falsely claiming that opioids are rarely addictive, misrepresenting that opioids improve patient function and quality of life, misrepresenting that patients could safely take opioids long-term for chronic pain management without becoming addicted, and falsely claiming that withdrawal was not a problem in prescribing opioids.

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan said, “the Opioid Crisis impacts not only the individuals utilizing the drugs, but their families, friends, and the communities they live in. Our residents should not be left to fight this epidemic alone, and that is why I am proud of join Mayors Read, McCarthy, and Madden as we highlight the significant burden this crisis has placed on our municipalities and seek to hold drug companies accountable for their deceptive practices.”

Plattsburgh Mayor Colin Read said, “the Opioid Crisis does not bypass small rural cities. Rather, these overprescribed drugs are ravaging Rural America, in the very communities that don’t have the extensive networks, facilities, or budgets to cope with such a scourge. When drug companies dispense pills at a rate of many times the population, they had to know the effect they were having on fraying the fabric of communities once immune from such problems.”

Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy said, “Opioid addiction and drug-related deaths have devastated families and communities all across the country. This epidemic has placed significant burdens on municipal resources, including the City of Schenectady, overwhelming drug treatment centers and emergency responders. I am proud to stand with my Upstate colleagues taking this action today in state supreme court.”

Troy Mayor Patrick Madden said, “The over-prescription of opioid medications has devastated families and residents of our community, serving as a gateway to heroin while draining essential resources of our emergency personnel tasked with responding to the rapidly increasing number of medical emergencies associated with this epidemic. The addictive nature of these drugs combined with the pharmaceutical industry’s failure to disclose the destructive side-effects of their product is dangerous mix for communities like Troy, and they must be held accountable.”

Attorney **Donald W. Boyajian** of the law firm **Dreyer Boyajian LaMarche Safranko PLLC**, said, “We have needlessly lost too many lives to this epidemic caused by big pharma’s recklessness. This epidemic continues to cause both human and financial crisis within these cities every day that threatens the health, welfare, and safety of residents, municipal employees and their loved ones.”

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