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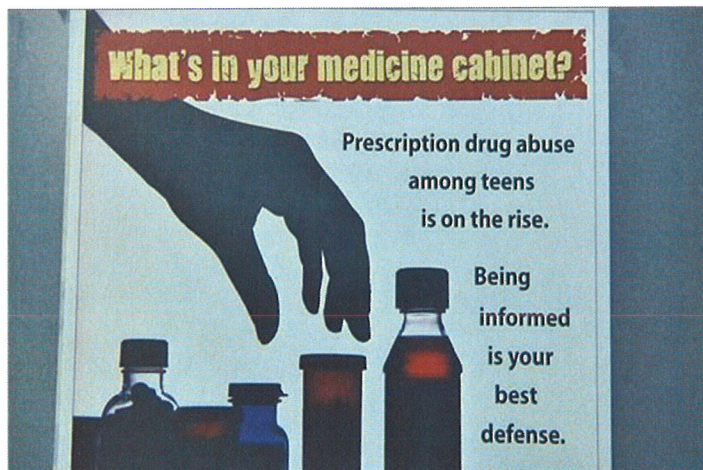
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## Schumer Says Senate Supports Reclassifying Hydrocodone

By: Mike Hedeem

Senator Charles Schumer came to Rochester to garner support for putting stronger restrictions on prescription painkillers. Schumer believes his proposed bill would keep those drugs out of the wrong hands.

Schumer is targeting hydrocodone. It's a painkilling drug that doctors prescribe for patients following surgery. Schumer says nearly 270,000 prescriptions for hydrocodone are written annually in the Rochester-Finger Lakes Region.



At DePaul in Gates, Schumer was flanked by health care professionals and law enforcement. His proposed bill would reclassify hydrocodone as a Schedule II drug based on its high risk for abuse and addiction.

He said prescription drugs are Monroe County's second most prevalent illegal drug problem. Although legal, Schumer says hydrocodone is highly addictive and can lead to other drug abuse.

"Heroin is going up in the Rochester, Finger Lakes area because heroin is the same type of high as Vicodin or hydrocodone but it's actually now cheaper to get. Because so many people have prescription drug abuse, the cost of those drugs have gone up while heroin abuse has gone down and now it's coming back up," said Schumer, D.

"This prescription drug abuse, prescription opioid abuse, generally is starting in the early to mid teens. As a result of that we're seeing an increase in the number of – when we look at the data, we break it down to late teens, early 20s to early 30s, they account now for about 50 percent of our patient population. That's more than double what it was just four years ago," said URM recovery director Patrick Seche.

Schumer calls his proposed bill a no-brainer, saying it has bipartisan support in the Senate. He's confident if it passes that chamber, the House will follow suit.

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