

Libous says Cuomo plan sets back drug treatment

By CRAIG McGUIRE

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The chair of the Senate Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee said he was "extremely disturbed" by the governor inattention to the drug problem.

Sen. Thomas Libous, R-Binghamton, said the governor has put the drug problem "on the back burner."

The governor said his budget recommendations for the combined drug and alcoholic department direct resources to priority service needs, eliminate non-essential, duplicative and discretionary services "and consolidate and streamline operations wherever possible."

That amounts to a \$20 million cut in state funding for research, staff training, outreach programs and other non-direct care services.

An additional \$9.8 million would be cut in the area of preventive services.

It is the first budget to address both alcoholism and drug abuse under the same agency — the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), which was established in 1992 through a merger of The Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (DAAA) with the Division of Substance Abuse Services (DSAS).

"After four years of effort, beginning with the governor appointing Lt. Gov. Lundine (chairman of the Anti-Drug Abuse Council) this budget sets us back 10 years," said Libous, co-sponsor of the OASAS consolidation bill last year with Assemblyman John Brian Murtaugh.

"The drug problem in New York is always increasing. This budget treats it like it doesn't exist," said Libous.

Murtaugh, chair of the Assembly Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee, could not be reached for comment.

According to the budget document, as OASAS continues to re-evaluate existing services, it will strengthen and advance the state's war on drugs agenda.

According to OASAS, 874,000 people in New York use drugs regularly and 1.9 million New Yorkers are affected by alcoholism.

Daily, 100,000 people use the facilities provided by OASAS which include both residential and outpatient treatment.

The budget proposal for 1993-94 also calls for the closing of the Alcohol Treatment Center (ATC) at Creedmore, Queens. Besides Creedmore there are 12 other ATCs operating across the state.

The governor's budget did provide for limited increases:

- \$8.7 million in the annualization of new programs;
- the appropriation of \$5.4 million to address a four percent cost of living adjustment.

Still, the proposed budget is \$15.7 million less than in 1992-93.