Minnesota House to Hit Drug Companies for Opioid Epidemic

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The Minnesota House recently voted to hold drug manufacturers responsible for the state?s growing costs for dealing with the current opioid epidemic. The nationwide health crisis has led to the deaths of thousands of people due to opioid-related cases of overdose. While various measures have been taken to control the distribution of prescription medications, the crisis has not yet been averted.

The bill passed 94-34 after around four hours of debate that split mostly along party lines. The Minnesota House bill aims to support a wide range of prevention, education, intervention, treatment, and recovery strategies. The state would fund the initiative by sharply raising its current low annual registration fees for pharmaceutical manufacturers and drug wholesalers that sell or distribute opioids in Minnesota.

The fees would bring in $20 million a year that would go into a new ?Opioid Stewardship Fund?. A new advisory council would then make recommendations to state officials on how to allocate the said funds.

Settlements reached by the state from opioid lawsuits against drug manufacturers would also be deposited into the fund. Click the link to see Seattle's top rehab placement programs.

Another opioid bill is working its way through the GOP-controlled Senate. The bill has a few key differences and is scheduled for another hearing. The two versions are expected to go to a conference committee for resolution.

Opioid-involved overdoses led to more than 2,000 visits to Minnesota emergency rooms in 2017, according to the various sponsors. Meanwhile, opioid-related overdose deaths in Minnesota have increased steadily since 2010, to 395 in 2016.

?This cost of responding to this crisis is huge, and it's hard to even calculate," the Duluth Democrat said. As just one example, she said, county social service agencies are "drowning" in costs for placing children from affected families into other homes,? said Rep. Liz Olson. Taxpayers are undoubtedly among the hardest hit by the opioid crisis.

But Olson also said that one sector has actually benefited from opioids while failing to step up to the challenges of the opioid epidemic: the pharmaceutical industry. ?With profits in the hundreds of millions, these groups have still not come to the table,? Olson said.

Among the Republicans supporting the bill was Rep. Dave Baker, whose son, Dan Baker, became addicted to opioid painkillers. His son died of a heroin overdose in 2011. Baker said it would put Minnesota on the ?cutting edge? of fighting the opioid crisis.

Baker was also a chief author of a bill with a different funding mechanism, dubbed ?penny a pill,? which passed the Senate last year but failed to get a House floor vote amid industry opposition.

Republican House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, who was speaker last session, led the opposition. According to Daudt, imposing higher costs on the pharmaceutical industry will have the opposite effect. It runs counter to the goal of reducing health care costs for consumers, who are the most affected by the opioid crisis.

?This will literally increase the cost of health care for every Minnesotan,? he said. While new bills are being debated, other measures and initiatives focused on rehabilitation and treatment are also being implemented all over the country. The opioid epidemic is a complex issue and one that requires a quick solution.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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