

Opioid Response Bill Settled by Minnesota Lawmakers through 11th-Hour Deal

June 03, 2019

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Around $20 million a year can be generated in fees from prescription drug makers in order to combat the opioid epidemic, now that Minnesota lawmakers have reached an 11th-hour deal on an opioid response bill.

Supporters say that this agreement could make the state the first ever to establish a separate state fund dedicated to opioid addiction prevention and treatment. The lawmakers announced that the deal has been made mere hours before the Legislature?s adjournment deadline.

?This is a day I'm really proud to be a legislator,? said Rep. Dave Baker, a Willmar Republican. Baker?s 25-year-old son Dan died of an overdose in 2011. He added: ?This is going to save a lot of lives.?

Lawmakers in both chambers approved the compromise language, the House 109-25 and the Senate 60-3. It now heads to the desk of Gov. Tim Walz, who is expected to sign it.

Before a compromise was reached, versions of the proposal passed both chambers with bipartisan support earlier this session. The legislation hit a snag amid a disagreement over whether to lower or roll back some

licensing fees if the state wins a legal settlement in one of several pending lawsuits against the companies that make prescription drugs like OxyContin.

A week of intense negotiations followed, wherein lawmakers opted to lower the fees on some companies in five years if the fund reaches $250 million. It will be done either through a large settlement or from the fee collections.

At that point, the amount paid by the largest opiate manufacturers would drop from $305,000 to a little more than $5,000 a year. Supporters say that it would still generate roughly $12 million each year.

At first, Democrats resisted linking the fees to possible settlements in the pending lawsuits. Click the link to see Baltimore's top rehab placement programs.

?This bill is not about retribution, it's about taking care of the needs of Minnesotans and making sure we don't have any more lost people, lost loved ones,? said Republican Sen. Julie Rosen, chief author of the Senate bill and a key figure in the negotiations. ?This is one thing we could have done, and we got it done.?

The deal also resolved disagreements over how to spend the money. More than a third of the revenue will go to grants that are distributed by a new 19-member council tasked with crafting a comprehensive state response to the epidemic. The fund, which will range between $7.7 million and $8.5 million a year, also provides funding for overdose prevention and efforts aimed at stopping illegal drug trafficking and child protective services programs.

Another $2 million will go to traditional healing programs aimed at providing pain management alternatives that don?t involve the use of narcotics.

The bill sets stricter limits on opiate prescriptions for acute pain and sets continuing education requirements for medical providers who prescribe addictive drugs. Doctors could override the caps if they feel it is medically necessary, depending on the situation.

?This is a really comprehensive bill,? said DFL Rep. Liz Olson, chief sponsor of the House bill. ?It is not just about tackling the crisis in a one-dimensional way. It is about ongoing, dedicated revenue to tackle this crisis in a multipronged approach.?

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol 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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