



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Contact: Ally Biasotti, [202-224-7433](tel:202-224-7433)

**AS THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC CONTINUES TO
PLAGUE WESTCHESTER & ROCKLAND
COUNTIES, WITH OPIOID RELATED DEATHS
JUMPING 75% & 61% RESPECTIVELY
BETWEEN '13 AND '16, SCHUMER PUSHES FOR
CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY TO AID
WESTCHESTER & ORANGE POLICE
DEPARTMENTS IN QUICKLY & EFFECTIVELY
IDENTIFYING LETHAL DRUGS LIKE
FENTANYL; SENATOR SAYS CONGRESS
SHOULD IMMEDIATELY PASS NEW
BIPARTISAN GRANT PROGRAM TO HELP
LOCAL PD'S PAY FOR HIGH-TECH TOOL**

*With Opioid Deaths Steadily Rising In Westchester & Rockland, Senator
Launches Push To Pass "POWER Act" Grant Program To Help Local
Police Pay For High-Tech Chemical Detection Tool To Sniff Out Illegal
Drugs Like Fentanyl*

*According To Drug Enforcement Experts, It Only Takes A Small Amount
Of Fentanyl To Cause A Deadly Reaction; Senator Says Congress Must
Do Everything Possible To Keep The Public & Police Safe*

Schumer: Deploying New Tech Across Lower Hudson Valley Could Be A Game-Changer To Keeping Police Officers Safe & Protect From Lethal Fentanyl ODs

Standing at New Rochelle Police Department, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer today renewed his push to pass the *Providing Officers with Electronic Resources (POWER) Act*. According to Schumer, the bipartisan bill, set to be reintroduced by Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rob Portman (R-OH), creates a new grant program through the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that will help state and local law enforcement secure new high-tech, portable screening devices to quickly, effectively, and safely identify dangerous drugs, like fentanyl, in the field. Schumer explained that the opioid crisis requires an all-hands-on-deck and an all-of-the-above approach, especially in Rockland and Westchester Counties, which both hold High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) designations and routinely have some of the highest rates of opioid-related deaths in New York State. Senator Schumer detailed how the *POWER Act* will give law enforcement the tools they need to address this deadly drug on the ground level.

“The opioid epidemic has ravaged communities in Westchester and Rockland Counties and throughout the lower Hudson Valley. It is not only ripping families apart it is also putting our law enforcement officials at risk by exposing them to illegal and fatal substances such as fentanyl,” said **Senator Schumer**. “And it is our responsibility to protect the men and women who bravely put themselves in harm’s way to ensure the public safety of our communities by providing them with the proper resources to do their job. This bill and these screening devices will help keep law enforcement safe and allow them to work more efficiently while on the front lines fighting the opioid epidemic ravaging our communities.”

Schumer said that overdoses and fatalities have plagued Westchester and Rockland Counties in recent years. Schumer explained that fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than heroin, has quickly swept into the Hudson Valley, and is exacerbating the opioid epidemic which is already destroying families in Westchester and Rockland Counties. According to New York State Department of Health, in 2017, there were 111 fatal overdoses in Westchester County, 248 outpatient emergency department visits, and 2,126 people admitted into chemical dependence treatment programs. Additionally, in 2017, there were 33 overdose deaths in Rockland County, 71 outpatient emergency department visits, and 650 people admitted into chemical dependence treatment programs. Schumer explained that these overdoses are from both heroin, and heroin combined with fentanyl or fentanyl analogs. Schumer said that this lethal combination of drugs is referred to as “Gray Death.”

Overdose Deaths				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Westchester	67	85	126	111
Rockland	23	16	27	37

NY Average	8.1	9	10.4	13.3
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Although pharmaceutical fentanyl can be misused, most of the fentanyl being sold on the street is illicitly manufactured. While distributors in China are the principal source of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture the drug, as well as a source for finished-product illicit fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, there are a number of international sources of illicit fentanyl being smuggled into the United States. Fentanyl suppliers then use methods such as mislabeling shipments or concealing the drug inside legitimate goods in order to avoid law enforcement detection. Through July of 2018, U.S. Border Patrol seized nearly [340 pounds](#) of fentanyl, almost double the 181 pounds of fentanyl that were seized in all of 2017. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that between June 2017 and June 2018, a record 31,500 people in the United States died from synthetic opioid overdoses, excluding methadone. The labs that make these synthetic opioids take advantage of law enforcement officials' limited capabilities to detect fentanyl. Schumer added the drug is extremely lucrative for dealers and cartels, who can sell \$3,000 to \$5,000 in fentanyl purchased from a Chinese drug laboratory for up to \$1.5 million on the street.

Schumer was joined by **Mayor of New Rochelle Noam Bramson**, **New Rochelle Police Commissioner Joseph F. Schaller**, and local law enforcement officers.

“The POWER Act is an important part of a multi-layered strategy to address the opioid crisis. By putting high-tech tools in the hands of our local First Responders, we can quickly and safely identify dangerous drugs, protect our Police, and promote effective law enforcement. I applaud Senator Schumer’s leadership on this important priority and urge passage of this bipartisan legislation,” said **Noam Bramson, Mayor of New Rochelle**.

To address these challenges, Senator Schumer will be joining Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Rob Portman (R-OH), Cory Gardner (R-CO), and Thom Tillis (R-NC) to reintroduce the bipartisan POWER ACT to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the tools to identify illicit drugs and prevent them from spreading throughout NY communities. Schumer, who has a history of working to get law enforcement the resources and equipment necessary to keep our communities safe, announced his support for the bi-partisan legislation.

Specifically, the Schumer backed *POWER Act* would authorize \$20 million to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to create a new grant program to help state and local law enforcement organizations secure high-tech, portable screening devices – also known as interdiction devices - in order to better detect illicit fentanyl and protect field officers from exposure. The devices can cost anywhere from \$30,000 to \$80,000 per unit, which makes them cost prohibitive for local law enforcement agencies relying on already tight municipal budgets.

Federal law enforcement officials have already deployed this drug scanning equipment to screen contraband smuggled into the United States at the border or through the mail. For example, when border officials encounter a suspicious substance, it can be difficult to detect the source of the illicit material and whether it poses a hazard to them. In the face of this challenge, federal law enforcement agencies at U.S. ports of entry have had success with screening and determining

illicit drugs, like fentanyl, with the help of these high-tech, handheld chemical screening devices. The POWER Act ensures that local law enforcement in communities in the Hudson Valley and beyond can also afford to obtain this same technology and portable chemical screening devices, in order to better interpret tests gathered from the field, and minimize agent's exposure to dangerous substances.

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