



---

## FROM THE OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN

---



### **Excerpt from Ulster County Executive Mike Hein's February 9, 2016 State of the County Speech**

Protecting our kids has become more complicated now than ever. As a County we have worked extremely hard to reduce the harmful impacts of opioid and heroin addiction. We are investing over \$1.1 million in education, treatment and other important steps like making sure our first responders have easy access to Narcan to help them treat overdoses and prevent senseless tragedies. Soon we will also have a dedicated Family Advocate to assist individuals and families in obtaining treatment and navigating the often daunting world of insurance coverage.

But even with all these efforts, there is still so much left to do. To assist in this effort we need to reach beyond our own community to our policymakers in Albany and Washington, since it is becoming more and more common that people struggling with heroin got their start by using prescription pain pills. Counties across New York have been successful in getting some of these unused medications out of people's medicine cabinets and off the streets with programs called "Shed the Meds." Ulster County has led the way with some of the highest numbers of prescription drug collection boxes in upstate New York at our Sheriff's and town police departments.

While these efforts are important, they are not nearly enough. Unlike their pharmacy, many folks feel very uncomfortable going into police stations so they simply don't. The practical, convenient and most impactful solution is to require large commercial pharmacy chains that make billions of dollars selling medication to New Yorkers to simply take back the unused portion of the narcotics they sell.

I am not talking about small, local pharmacies with limited budgets. I am talking about huge national chains that clearly have the means to do this. Though this may seem like a common sense solution that should already be in place, unfortunately there is a massive loophole in our laws. The industry has powerful lobbyists so the existing State and Federal laws are not mandatory. No one has to participate and very few do.

I am asking the County Legislature to join me in urging our lawmakers in Albany and Washington D.C. to protect our children by demanding that large pharmacy chains simply take back the unused portion of the very medications they make billions in profit by selling.