



# *Media Advisory...*

*from State Representative La Shawn K. Ford*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford

773-378-5902

## **Ford Introduces Legislation to Save Lives in the Opioid Overdose Epidemic**

**CHICAGO** – Emphasizing that we have to do everything that we can to save lives during the epidemic of deaths from overdoses, state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, has introduced legislation to make sure that those who have suffered an overdose have the antidote medicine naloxone when they leave the hospital.

There are now more deaths due to opioid overdoses in the United States and Illinois than deaths due to car accidents or even due to gun violence. For this 12-month period ending in September 2018, the National Center for Health Statistics reports that 69,894 Americans died of drug overdoses. Nearly 70% of those overdose deaths were due to opioids such as heroin or even stronger substances such as fentanyl. In 2017, more than 2000 people died of opioid overdoses in Illinois, and 796 people died of opioid overdose in Chicago. That is more than 2 deaths a day in Chicago due to opioid overdoses. There are more than 10,000 Illinois emergency department visits per year for opioid overdoses.

Ford, co-founder of the West Side Heroin Task Force, said “I personally know people, including people I went to school with, who have died of overdoses at home. We have to do better. This epidemic is hitting Illinois, Chicago, and especially the West Side, very hard. When people experience an overdose, it is a wake-up call that we all have to respond to. We need more naloxone, the antidote that can reverse an overdose, in the hands of family and community members, so they can more quickly respond to an overdose when it happens at home or on our streets.”

Ford’s legislation requires hospitals to provide a patient who is treated for an opioid overdose at the hospital with one dose of or one prescription for an opioid antagonist [such as naloxone] upon discharge from the hospital, free of charge.

“Now, if 911 was called and your loved one was taken to the hospital after an overdose, most often he or she was stabilized and then released,” said Ford. “What people often don’t realize that a person can be on the brink of death, taken to the ER and then released without a discharge plan for treatment or continuing care. This must change – after an overdose, people should be offered a warm handoff for ongoing care for their opioid use disorder. But if that is not possible for everyone now, the least we can do is make sure that they have the overdose reversal medication naloxone when they are discharged from the hospital, and that their family and friends know how to use it.”

For more information, please contact Ford’s constituent service office at 773-378-5902 or email [Repford@lashawnford.com](mailto:Repford@lashawnford.com).

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