

Senate Passes Bill Targeting Drug Addiction Patient Brokering

By Administrator

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The North Carolina Senate today passed the Stop Addiction Fraud Emergency (SAFE) Act, sponsored by Sens. Jim Burgin (R-Harnett), Joyce Krawiec (R-Forsyth), and Jim Perry (R-Lenoir). The measure targets “patient brokers,” who refer people addicted to drugs to rehabilitation facilities in exchange for fees, or kickbacks. Brokers target drug abusers and lead them to rehab clinics, many of which are out of state, that pay the brokers for the referral. In some cases, brokers track drug abusers and reintroduce them to their addiction so they can earn referral fees again and again for the same patient.

The SAFE Act would make it unlawful for any rehabilitation facility to pay referral fees or for any third party to solicit referral fees.

Sen. Burgin said, “There are awful stories from around the country of patient brokers targeting vulnerable people with addictions and cycling them through rehabilitation facilities, all for a cash kickback. That practice is already illegal in many states, and it should be illegal in North Carolina, too.”

Sen. Krawiec said, “People who struggle with addiction, and their families, are already going through so much. They don't need unscrupulous patient brokers misleading them in search of a kickback.”

Sen. Perry said, “Patient brokers prey upon the most vulnerable and they must be stopped. This bill allows local prosecutors to take action against patient brokers, just like authorities in other states and at the federal level can.”

The U.S. Congress passed legislation in 2018 to make patient brokering a federal crime. The SAFE Act would similarly make patient brokering illegal in North Carolina, which would allow the practice to be prosecuted locally.