

"THE BENZO BILL"



S. 1260 / H. 2117

An Act Relative to Benzodiazepines
and Non-Benzodiazepine Hypnotics
Sen. Brownsberger & Rep. McMurtry

THE PROBLEM

Benzodiazepines and non-benzodiazepine hypnotics are commonly known anti-anxiety and sleep medications which include brand names like Ativan, Klonopin, Xanax, and Ambien. **Research and patient experience show that consumers are being harmed through long-term prescribing. Large numbers of compliant patients suffer devastating and long-lasting adverse effects to their central nervous systems and their lives in general from being prescribed these drugs in a prolonged manner.** Over time, patients tend to experience worsened outcomes in both targeted uses (e.g., anxiety and sleep) with additional side effects (e.g., memory loss) **at prescribed dosages.** As in the case of opiates, the public has been misled about the consequences of these drugs. To make matters worse, both prescribers and patients often mistake the cumulative negative effects of their long-term prescription for underlying medical or mental pathology, leading to inappropriate treatments and further harmful consequences. And though their stand-alone abuse potential is small, benzodiazepines are also implicated in > 30% of opiate-related overdoses.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The results of a 1988 RCT conducted by the makers of Xanax showed significantly worse long-term effects in drug patients vs. non-drug patients on all measures. These findings were covered up by the manufacturer
- In late 2020, in response to postmarketing adverse events reports, the FDA announced that a black box warning mentioning "withdrawal reactions" will now be required
- Similar bills that address long-term prescribing have been filed in CT and NJ. CO is also attempting to address prescribing patterns through its legislature
- Qualitest, a manufacturer of generic Ativan (lorazepam); The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence; State Health Guidelines for NY & PA; The Beers List; and Kaiser Permanente all advise that benzodiazepines should not be used continuously for longer than 2-4 weeks

See back for details of bill



DETAILS OF THE BILL:

*This legislation **would not** prevent the filling of prescriptions.*

Instead, it seeks to provide consumers with more complete information so that they may make individual, informed decisions with their providers in accordance with shared decision-making.



- Practitioners must obtain a patient's written informed consent regarding information on misuse and abuse, risk of physical dependence and addiction, and risks associated with long-term use
- Pharmacists must ensure that prescription labels include a bolded cautionary statement concerning risks associated with long-term use
- DPH will produce pamphlets to be distributed by pharmacists which contain educational information on misuse and abuse, risk of physical dependence and addiction, storage and disposal, addiction treatment resources, and a telephone helpline operated by the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services
- DPH will establish safe discontinuation protocols that minimize withdrawal symptoms
- Written prescriptions for less than a 10-day supply will not be refilled