



## **Lt. Governor Hall-Long, NFL Hall of Famer Randy White Announce the *Bench Opioids Initiative* to Curb Opioid Abuse**

*The joint initiative with DisposeRx will aim to prevent the misuse of unused prescription medications among Delaware students*

**NEWARK, DE-** Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long joined NFL Hall of Famer, and native Delawarean, Randy White at the DIAA women's high school basketball semi-finals on Wednesday to announce a new statewide initiative to curb prescription drug abuse in Delaware. The "Bench Opioids" initiative is a proactive prevention and drug disposal blitz targeting opioid abuse and overdose deaths, especially among student athletes.

"We are putting on a full court press to stop prescription opioid abuse," said **Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, Ph.D., R.N.** "As chair of Delaware's Behavioral Health Consortium, I have heard from far too many families who have an empty seat at their table due to an overdose. It's critical we do all we can to educate Delaware students and families across our state about the dangers of unused prescription medication. Thanks to the work of Dispose Rx and our state partners, we are fighting back and saving lives.

Lt. Governor Hall-Long and Randy White were also featured speakers during the halftimes of both games on Wednesday. For the first time publicly, White shared the story of the recent loss of his son-in-law due to a prescription drug overdose.

"Like thousands of other families across the United States, my family has been directly impacted by the opioid epidemic," said **Randy White, former Dallas Cowboy and NFL Hall of Famer.** "I am proud of the leadership of Lt. Governor Hall-Long and that my home state of Delaware will be the first in the nation to expand our Friday Night Lights Against Opioids efforts to basketball with the Bench Opioids initiative. I know all too well that just one pill can kill. This effort to educate communities about the dangers of taking pills you're not prescribed and to dispose of unused drugs is crucial to saving lives."

The initiative will feature public service announcements from sports legends, educational materials for students, and free drug disposal kits to promote the proper disposal of medication.

DisposeRx was on hand to distribute hundreds of drug disposal kits to students, families and fans at the conclusion of Wednesday night's games.

"Delaware Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long, as well as leaders from the state Department of Education, Department of Safety and Homeland Security and others, are to be commended for continuing their efforts to educate citizens about the dangers associated with opioids," said **DisposeRx President and Chief Executive Officer William Simpson**. "We are proud to partner with Delaware to support their prevention efforts and to continue building state collaborations throughout the country to promote family safety."

Recent data shows that about 70% of teens who misuse opioids get them from friends or relatives. Delaware currently ranks third in the country for drug overdose deaths. About 67% of those deaths were opioid related.

"The bench opioids initiative is a great opportunity. As we battle this dangerous and deadly opioid epidemic, we must ensure that our prevention efforts are targeted directly at communities susceptible to substance misuse, especially young people. It will take all of us – public officials, educators, parents, coaches, and community members – working together to ultimately reduce the number of overdose deaths across our state. Increasing the awareness of high school athletes is essential to our efforts. It is our hope that we will all benefit from this event as we all work toward our shared goal of safety and security in all of our Delaware Communities," said **Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Nathaniel McQueen, Jr.**

"DIAA is pleased to host the pilot of this program at our boys, girls and unified basketball championships," **DIAA Executive Director Donna Polk** said. "We look forward to continuing this partnership at future DIAA events. It's a great way to support the health and safety of our student athletes, their families and fans."

"We're proud to partner with the Lieutenant Governor and DisposeRx and the Department of Safety and Homeland Security to provide families with this tool to help keep their homes and children safe," **Secretary of Education Mark Holodick** said. "We hope this raises awareness among all of us about the dangers in our own homes so we can continue to seek ways to protect our families and communities."

###