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Press Release



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Contact:

Communications Office
(603)271-2121

Governor Hassan Signs Bipartisan Bills to Help Combat Heroin and Opioid Crisis

Expedited Legislation from Governor's Comprehensive Proposal Increases Penalties for Illegal Sale and Distribution for Fentanyl, Streamlines Access to Treatment, and Strengthens Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

CONCORD – As part of her efforts to combat the heroin and opioid crisis and to help save lives, Governor Maggie Hassan today signed two bipartisan bills, Senate Bill 576 and Senate Bill 447, which include significant parts of the comprehensive proposal that she put forward last November. The bills were expedited by the legislature following a recommendation of the Joint Task Force on the Heroin and Opioid Epidemic.

“The heroin and opioid crisis is the most pressing public health and public safety issue facing our state, and these measures will help give patients, providers, parents and law enforcement better tools in the fight against heroin and opioid abuse,” Governor Hassan said. “This includes cracking down on fentanyl, streamlining access to treatment and strengthening our prescription drug monitoring program, and I thank the legislature’s task force for its hard work over the last few months, as well as all of the members from both parties who came together to support this important legislation. The collaboration that made this expedited legislation possible represents the bipartisan approach that we must continue to take as we work to stem – and reverse – the tide of this horrible epidemic.”

In November 2015, Governor Hassan and the Executive Council called for a special session of the legislature to take up substance abuse legislation, and the Governor put forward a comprehensive legislative proposal. The legislature established a Joint Task Force on the Heroin and Opioid Epidemic that considered numerous measures in a robust public process, culminating with recommendations that included expediting Senate Bill 576 and Senate Bill 447.

Senate Bill 576 reflects several measures that were included in the Governor’s comprehensive proposal, including: increasing the penalties for the illegal sale and distribution of fentanyl, ensuring that they match those for heroin; streamlining access to treatment by requiring all insurance companies to use the same evaluation criteria and removing prior authorization requirements in certain cases; strengthening the state’s prescription drug monitoring program by mandating greater use by prescribers, expanding access to the program and permitting state funding for it; and adding two members to the Board of Medicine, including a pain management specialist.

In order to save lives when an overdose takes place, Governor Hassan has worked to increase the safe and effective use of Narcan by first responders and law enforcement officials, as well as the families and loved ones of those at risk of an overdose, recently announcing that Rite Aid became the first pharmacy chain to sign a standing order that makes Narcan available in its New Hampshire locations. Senate Bill 447 creates a study commission to evaluate those efforts to increase the safe and effective use of Narcan and consider potential improvements.

“While these bipartisan bills are an important step forward, the need for ongoing action remains urgent. We must constantly be working on a comprehensive approach to combat this crisis and save lives,” Governor Hassan said. “There remains broad, bipartisan support for many other items that the legislature will consider this session. We all recognize that there is more work to do to support law enforcement, to increase access to treatment and treatment capacity, to strengthen our recovery networks, and to prevent addiction in the first place.”

The legislature will take up other items from the Governor’s comprehensive proposal during this session, including several that were recommended for early consideration by the Joint Task Force on the Heroin and

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Opioid Epidemic. These measures include providing additional support to local law enforcement; requiring the boards governing all prescribers to develop permanent, updated rules on the prescribing of opioids; upgrading technology for the prescription drug monitoring program to ensure that more prescribers can use it in a timely fashion; and expanding drug courts.

Governor Hassan also continues to push for additional support for the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Recovery and the reauthorization of the bipartisan New Hampshire Health Protection Program, which has provided substance abuse behavioral health services to thousands of Granite Staters since coverage began in August of 2014.

"We must strengthen our support for the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Recovery, and we must also continue working together to reauthorize as soon as possible our bipartisan New Hampshire Health Protection, which experts have said is the single most effective step that we can take to increase treatment capacity," Governor Hassan said.

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