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Press Release

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Governor Hassan Urges Legislative Committees to Support Bills to Combat Heroin and Opioid Crisis

CONCORD – As part of her efforts to combat the heroin and opioid crisis and help save lives, Governor Maggie Hassan today submitted a letter to the Senate Finance Committee in support of Senate Bill 464, relative to establishing a statewide drug court grant program, and Senate Bill 485, relative to establishing a state grant program to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in addressing the opioid crisis.

Governor Hassan also submitted a letter to the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee in support of House Bill 1699, relative to establishing a licensed alcohol and drug counselor in the bureau of emergency medical services to develop a training program for fire and emergency medical services personnel.

“The heroin and opioid crisis is the most pressing public health and public safety issue facing our state, and we all must continue working together every day on a comprehensive approach to combat this crisis,” Governor Hassan said. “As we strengthen prevention, treatment and recovery efforts, we must also support law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics and other first responders who are working every day on the front lines of this epidemic.”

Senate Bill 464 and Senate Bill 485 were both recommended for early consideration by the Joint Task Force on the Heroin and Opioid Crisis and reflect measures that were included in the Governor’s comprehensive legislative proposal when she called for a special session last November. Senate Bill 464 would help establish new drug courts and expand existing ones throughout the state, and Senate Bill 485 would expand a [grant-funded effort underway in Manchester](#) to other high-risk communities in order to help support local law enforcement.

In order to help save lives when an overdose takes place, Governor Hassan has also worked to increase the safe and effective use of Narcan, including by all four general levels of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) – which includes many of the state’s firefighters. House Bill 1699 is aimed at reducing the need for Narcan and the incidence of repeated use by empowering fire and emergency medical services personnel to connect those they save from an overdose with treatment resources.

“Taken together, these three bills will address important needs in our law enforcement and public safety efforts to address this epidemic, while increasing access to treatment and recovery services for those battling addiction,” Governor Hassan said.

Both letters from the Governor are below.

January 26, 2016

The Honorable Jeanie Forrester
Chairwoman
Senate Finance Committee
Room 103, Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I write in support of Senate Bill 464, relative to establishing a statewide drug court grant program and making appropriations therefor, and Senate Bill 485, relative to establishing a state grant program to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in addressing the opioid crisis and making an appropriation therefor.

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The heroin and opioid crisis is the most pressing public health and public safety issue facing our state, and we all must continue working together every day on a comprehensive approach to combat this crisis. As we strengthen prevention, treatment and recovery efforts, we must also support the law enforcement officers who are working every day on the front lines of this epidemic. Combined, these two bills will help addicts access treatment and recovery services while assisting local law enforcement in their efforts to seize illicit drugs and arrest street-level dealers.

Our law enforcement officials have seen significant success in arresting drug dealers and seizing illegal drugs through their collaboration with our federal partners at the Drug Enforcement Agency, as well as a grant-funded effort underway in Manchester that allows the New Hampshire State Police to provide additional support in these efforts. With Senate Bill 485, we can provide additional support to local law enforcement on the front lines and ensure that the State Forensic Lab and the Department of Justice have the resources necessary to assist those efforts.

But at the same time, our law enforcement officers tell us that arrests alone won't solve this problem. Expanding drug courts across New Hampshire, as proposed in Senate Bill 464, is an important part of a comprehensive approach to combat this crisis and help save lives. Existing drug courts have proved effective in providing those within our justice system access to treatment and recovery. Drug courts have been successful in reducing crime, saving money and helping people return to their communities as contributing members of society through community supervision and intensive treatment.

As we continue to lose dozens of our fellow citizens to drug overdoses each month, the need for ongoing action to give patients, providers, parents, educators and law enforcement better tools in the fight against heroin and opioid abuse remains urgent. Taken together, these two bills will address important needs in our law enforcement efforts to address this epidemic, and both are an important step forward in our efforts. I commend you for your commitment to continuing to work together to combat this crisis and improve the health and well-being of citizens across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

With every good wish,

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor

January 26, 2016

Representative Andrew Christie, Chairman
House Executive Departments and Administration Committee
Room 306, Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman and Members of the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee:

I write in support of House Bill 1699, relative to establishing a licensed alcohol and drug counselor in the bureau of emergency medical services to develop a training program for fire and emergency medical services personnel and making an appropriation therefor. The heroin and opioid crisis is the most pressing public health and safety issue facing our state, and we all must continue working together every day on a comprehensive approach to combat this crisis, including supporting firefighters, paramedics and other first responders while focusing on strengthening prevention, treatment and recovery efforts.

We have taken a number of steps to increase the safe and effective use of Narcan, and while we must do everything that we can to save lives in the event of an overdose, we must continue strengthening prevention, treatment and recovery in order to reduce the incidence of overdoses in New Hampshire. Narcan is an important life-saving treatment, but it is not a panacea in our efforts to combat the heroin and opioid crisis. By ensuring that our fire fighters and EMS personnel can connect those they treat for an overdose with treatment and recovery experts, we can reduce the number of overdoses, and in turn, the need for Narcan.

As we lose more of our fellow citizens to drug overdose each month, it is even more critical to work together to give patients, providers, parents, educators and law enforcement better tools in the fight against heroin and opioid abuse. The legislation that you are considering today is an important step forward in these efforts, and I commend you for your commitment to continuing to work together to combat this crisis and improve the health and well-being of citizens across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

With every good wish,

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor

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