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Press Release

For Immediate Release

February 26, 2016

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Governor Hassan Urges Federal Government to Reinstate Equitable Sharing Payments Under Asset Forfeiture Program to Local and State Law Enforcement

Equitable Sharing Also Included as One of National Governors Association Priorities for Addressing the Opioid Crisis

CONCORD – Continuing her support of law enforcement efforts to combat the heroin and opioid crisis, Governor Maggie Hassan today sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch, urging the federal government to reinstate equitable sharing payments to local and state law enforcement under the Asset Forfeiture Program.

"Local and state law enforcement agencies depend on these payments as they work with federal authorities to remove illicit drugs from our streets," Governor Hassan wrote. "Without these payments, local and state law enforcement simply will not have the resources they need to keep our communities safe."

"In order to combat the heroin and opioid epidemic, we need an all-hands-on-deck approach at the local, state, and federal level," Governor Hassan continued. "In order to meet the federal government's commitment to local efforts, I ask that you please consider all budgetary options in order to reinstate equitable sharing payments."

In order to combat the heroin and opioid crisis and help save lives, Governor Hassan continues to focus on a comprehensive approach to support law enforcement and strengthen prevention, treatment and recovery. Last week, the National Governors Association Health and Human Services Committee, of which Governor Hassan is the Vice Chair, issued its priorities for addressing the opioid crisis, which included reinstating equitable sharing under the Asset Forfeiture Program.

In November 2015, Governor Hassan called for a special session of the legislature and proposed comprehensive legislation, and in January, she signed two expedited, bipartisan bills that reflected several measures included in the Governor's proposal, including cracking down on fentanyl, streamlining access to treatment and strengthening the state's prescription drug monitoring program. The Governor continues to work with members from both parties on other measures, including the reauthorization of the bipartisan New Hampshire Health Protection Program, which has provided substance abuse and behavioral health services to thousands of Granite Staters and is essential to increasing treatment capacity.

The full text of the Governor's letter to Attorney General Lynch is below:

February 26, 2016

Attorney General Lynch
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

The heroin and opioid crisis is the most pressing public health and safety challenge facing New Hampshire, and as we continue working to combat this horrible epidemic, it is critical that those on the front lines have the resources they need to protect our communities.

That is why I write to you with concern over the Department of Justice's recent decision to defer equitable sharing payments under the Asset Forfeiture Program. Local and state law enforcement agencies depend on

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these payments as they work with federal authorities to remove illicit drugs from our streets. Without these payments, local and state law enforcement simply will not have the resources they need to keep our communities safe. Because of this, I urge you to consider all options to reinstate equitable sharing payments as quickly as possible.

I understand equitable sharing payments were frozen in response to cuts made by Congress under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. As Governor, I strongly oppose these cuts to Asset Forfeiture Program Funds and would veto any similar efforts at the state level that would further exacerbate this issue. Just last week, the National Governors Association Health and Human Services Committee – of which I am the Vice Chair – issued our priorities for addressing the opioid crisis, which included reinstating equitable sharing under the Asset Forfeiture Program.

In order to combat the heroin and opioid epidemic, we need an all-hands-on-deck approach at the local, state, and federal level. In order to meet the federal government's commitment to local efforts, I ask that you please consider all budgetary options in order to reinstate equitable sharing payments. I look forward to hearing from you on this matter and on additional efforts to respond to this crisis.

With every good wish,

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor

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