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Press Release

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Governor Hassan Visits State Police Forensic Laboratory



Governor Hassan (right) and State Police Forensic Laboratory Director Timothy Pifer (left) during a tour of the forensic lab while a technician analyzes opioid cases in the background.

CONCORD – Highlighting the important role that New Hampshire's dedicated law enforcement officers play in combating the heroin and opioid crisis, Governor Maggie Hassan today visited the New Hampshire State Police Forensic Laboratory, where she toured the facility, met with technicians and received a briefing on the lab's work to analyze cases.

"New Hampshire's dedicated law enforcement officers play an integral role in our comprehensive strategy to combat the heroin and opioid crisis, and the work of the New Hampshire State Police Forensic Laboratory is critical to our efforts to seize illicit drugs and prosecute drug dealers," Governor Hassan said. "We have seen significant success through a state grant program that began last fall to support overtime at the State Police Forensic Laboratory, helping technicians process approximately 70 additional heroin and fentanyl cases per month, and we continued our efforts to reduce backlogs by working across party lines at the state level to expand Operation Granite Hammer, which includes additional support for overtime at the lab."

Last fall, Governor Hassan announced a state grant to support overtime at the State Police Forensic Laboratory, which helped reduce case backlog by allowing the lab to analyze approximately 70 additional heroin and opioid cases per month. The State's partnership with the Manchester Police Department's "Operation Granite Hammer," an initiative focused on ridding the city of street-level dealers and seizing illicit drugs, was also a part of the state grants announced last fall.

In June, Governor Hassan signed House Bill 1000, a bipartisan bill to expand Operation Granite Hammer statewide, which includes continuing efforts to reduce the backlog at the forensic lab by supporting overtime for

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technicians. The New Hampshire State Police Forensic Laboratory is estimated to receive approximately \$100,000 as part of the statewide expansion of Operation Granite Hammer.

In addition, last week the United States Department of Justice awarded the New Hampshire Department of Justice a Coverdell Science Improvement Act Grant. The Department of Justice routinely applies for this grant on a yearly basis and utilizes it to support the Office of Chief Medical Examiner and the Department of Safety State Labs. This year, the New Hampshire Department of Justice applied for additional discretionary funding to support hiring another pathologist to help conduct autopsies. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has seen a 50 percent increase in open autopsy cases per pathologist over the past several years as the overall caseload has increased.

"While we focus on strengthening prevention, treatment and recovery programs, we must also work to support law enforcement's efforts to seize illicit drugs and prosecute drug dealers," Governor Hassan said. "The work of the State Police Forensic Laboratory is essential to our efforts to combat this horrible epidemic, and we must continue working across party lines to provide our dedicated law enforcement officers with the resources they need to help save lives."

For more information on the State Police Forensic Laboratory, visit www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/nhsp/forensiclab/.

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