

May 8, 2019

Dear Senator Warren,

Massachusetts families have been hit particularly hard by the opioid crisis, with a rate of opioid overdose deaths that [was almost twice](#) the national average in 2017. First responders, law enforcement officials, and health providers here in Massachusetts and across the country are on the front lines of this public health crisis, working tirelessly to save lives and find long-term solutions. For too long, they have been forced to shoulder the burden of addressing this crisis on their own.

As the opioid crisis has devastated Massachusetts communities, policymakers in Washington have been slow to act in a meaningful way. Congress and this administration have not done enough to provide first responders with the resources they need to save lives.

As Massachusetts sheriffs, we see the deadly consequences of inaction. Addiction is an illness, but far too many can't afford to get treatment. Individuals in Massachusetts prisons are among the most vulnerable to addiction and overdose. According to a recent [study](#), an estimated 65% of incarcerated people nationwide suffer from addiction, yet only 11% receive treatment. Those who don't get treatment in prison face an astronomically high risk of overdose when they are released. In Massachusetts, formerly incarcerated individuals are 120 times [more likely](#) to die from opioid-related overdose than the general population.

Massachusetts public health and law enforcement officials are working to build programs that provide evidence-based treatment services to individuals with substance use disorders during their incarceration. We're also working to help these individuals overcome addiction and reintegrate with their communities after they leave our facilities, but resource constraints make it impossible for us to provide help to everyone who needs it.

Today, we're calling for greater federal support to bring an end to the opioid crisis in the Commonwealth. We support Senator Elizabeth Warren's [Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency \(CARE Act\)](#), the most ambitious bill ever put forward in the U.S. Senate to confront the opioid epidemic. It would allocate \$100 billion over ten years to put decision-making power in the hands of first responders and local leaders and make addiction treatment available to everyone who needs it. The CARE Act would expand access to medication-assisted treatment and create a targeted grant program to make sure resources go directly to communities that have been hit the hardest. We know that this bill, if enacted, would help us get the resources we desperately need to support those in our care.

Importantly, the CARE Act provides a comprehensive path to ensure the full range of recovery services are fully funded, including housing, child care services, and even legal or career services. The CARE Act also allows for the expansion of early intervention services, providing individuals access to treatment and recovery services as soon as they need them. Finally, it helps workers who are at risk of or currently struggling with addiction maintain employment, or even re-enter the workforce. These services, along with prevention and treatment services, will

ultimately help reduce recidivism rates among formerly incarcerated individuals. Resources allocated under the CARE Act will not only help save lives, they'll help change lives for the better, too.

We can't afford to wait any longer to pass this comprehensive legislation. We're proud to stand behind Senator Warren's bill, and look forward to working with her to get it signed into law.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Patrick J. Cahillane
Hampshire County

Sheriff Kevin F. Copping
Essex County

Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian
Middlesex County

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins
Suffolk County

Sheriff Nicholas Cocchi,
Hampden County

Sheriff Christopher J. Donelan
Franklin County

Sheriff Robert Ogden
Dukes County