

The Inaugural Address of Attorney General Maura Healey
Faneuil Hall, Boston
January 21, 2015
4:30pm

Thank you. Thank you all so much.

And thank you to my dear friend, Senator Cowan.

Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, Treasurer Goldberg, and Mayor Walsh,
Speaker DeLeo and Distinguished Members of the Legislature,
Chief Justice Gants and Members of the Judiciary,
My colleagues in public service and law enforcement,
Thank you all for being here today.

Thank you to my family, my parents, my brothers and sisters, and to my partner, Gabrielle.

Thank you to so many who worked so hard to make this day possible.

And thank you to my colleagues in the Attorney General's Office.

I am so excited to begin our work together.

Let me also express my gratitude to my friend, Martha Coakley.

You have led an office defined by excellence and integrity, and a career that exemplifies public service. The work we do going forward would not be possible without your leadership over the last eight years. (Now that you'll be analyzing our work on television, we hope you'll say good things.)

I also thank my other predecessors who've offered their continued support. And today, we remember a great leader, Attorney General and U.S. Senator Ed Brooke.

It's fitting that we're gathered here in Faneuil Hall.

In this great hall, people have spoken out against oppression and slavery, and in favor of women's rights.

Today, this is where lawyers are admitted to the bar, and where immigrants become citizens – both swearing allegiance to the Constitution and to the principles of liberty, equality, and justice.

In Faneuil Hall, we become Americans, and we discuss what it means to be an American.

As John F. Kennedy said, "This old hall reminds us of how far we've been as Americans and what we must do in the future."

And today, that's what I want to talk about: what we must do to build a better future.

We have a heroin and prescription drug crisis that continues to spread.

Our residents face rising health care costs and a market they can't understand.

Our families are struggling to pay loans and heating bills.

And far too many have had their lives turned upside down by gun violence, domestic violence, and sexual assault, whether at the hands of human traffickers or college classmates.

As the people's lawyer, the Attorney General is here to take on those tough challenges.

Fighting for opportunity across Massachusetts.

Securing its promise for every resident.

That is my commitment to you.

That commitment begins with an Attorney General's Office guided by the values of responsiveness, inclusion, and integrity.

That way, the people we are here to serve, will know we are on their side.

It means leading an office that reaches out to communities as often as it litigates.

So, in the coming months, I'll be creating a new Division of Community Engagement.

Through events and social media, with our website and with video, through robust consumer hotlines and a strong presence in regional offices across the state, we will strengthen our efforts to engage and serve the public.

That is how we will lead the people's law firm.

And when we talk about securing promise for every resident, that starts with the million and a half children who are counting on us to help them grow into their future.

So, I will be establishing a first-of-its-kind division focused on protecting young people.

The division will fight to keep our children safe and healthy, in their schools and in their homes, on the streets and online.

Together with our partners, we will take on teen addiction, dating violence, and child abuse, and find ways to reduce the number of young people in our juvenile justice system.

And we will work with our state agencies to help ensure the reforms that we need.

Securing promise for every resident means tackling an unprecedented public health crisis in this state. Heroin and prescription drug abuse are taking lives every day.

A couple of weeks ago, I announced that this will be a priority for my office.

We will work to improve our prescription monitoring program, educate prescribers, go after drug traffickers and pill mills, and expand access to recovery and treatment programs.

When I made that announcement, I heard from hundreds of people.

Many offered help – doctors and pharmacists, police officers and paramedics, social workers and school nurses, who are on the front lines every day.

But too many shared tragic stories of loss.

A beloved nurse, who became addicted to painkillers – and then heroin. She left behind a young daughter and a loving spouse.

A junior in college with a passion for running and a bright future ahead of her, who overdosed the day after Christmas.

To all those who have lost a loved one to this epidemic: I stand with you.

I know I will have partners across this state: in every city, suburb, and rural town.

And I look forward to working with Governor Baker on this shared priority.

Securing promise for every resident means leading an office that advocates for hard-working families across Massachusetts.

For safe workplace conditions and fair pay.

For access to affordable health care and mental health parity.

For reliable and sustainable energy.

For transparency and fairness in lending and commerce.

Recently, I spent an afternoon with a group of young women who had worked hard to improve their lives by pursuing an education.

But they enrolled in for-profit schools that offered little training and no real job opportunities. They were left with debts they could not afford to repay.

We will make access to quality higher education a priority by supporting programs that expand opportunity, like our great community college system.

But if you want to prey on our students, then you have picked the wrong state!

And to those hurt by unequal pay or employers who would deny women access to the health care they need, I'm here to say that the people's law firm will be fighting for you!

It's against the law to pay a woman less for the same job!

These aren't just women's issues. They're issues for every family trying to heat their home, put clothes on their kids, or buy groceries.

And we will take them on!

Securing promise for every resident means ensuring accountability from a gaming industry that's coming to Massachusetts.

The casinos have made many commitments in exchange for their licenses.

As the people's lawyer, I will hold them to those commitments and make sure they follow the law.

Securing promise for every resident means targeting violence.

We need to get illegal guns off our streets and prosecute the traffickers. We need to focus on root causes of violence by investing in social service programs.

And we need to address the culture of sexual assault that pervades our campuses and our communities.

I will help our colleges and universities keep students safe and hold perpetrators accountable. I will make sure that the new domestic violence law is working and advocate for expanded resources for survivors across the state.

And I will work with Mayor Walsh to open a safe house for human trafficking victims.

Securing promise for every resident means reforming our criminal justice system.

Many of us spent last weekend honoring Dr. King and recommitting to the work of a more fair and equal society. As a leader in law enforcement and as a civil rights attorney, the questions raised in Ferguson, New York, and across this country have been close to my heart.

We cannot incarcerate our way to expanded opportunity.

We need more mental health and substance abuse treatment, more diversion programs, and stronger reentry services and job training.

All of this is a tall order for maybe the shortest person ever elected to this office.

But I'll be at every community meeting, courthouse – and yes, every basketball court – I can get to – where there are willing partners ready to roll up their sleeves and turn these words into action.

I take this office mindful of – and deeply humbled by – the trust you have placed in me. I thank you for that and will work every day to honor your trust.

This great hall reminds us of where we've been and where we must go.

I ask each of you to join me on this journey.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless Massachusetts and the United States of America.