

**CHARLIE BAKER**  
GOVERNOR



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LT. GOVERNOR

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## **Governor Baker, Mayor Walsh Testify to Urge Passage of Opioid Legislation**

**BOSTON** – Governor Charlie Baker today testified before the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse, alongside Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh and a representative from Attorney General Maura Healey's office, in support of the Governor's bill, "An Act Relative to Substance Use Treatment, Education and Prevention." Filed in mid-October, the landmark legislation has gained significant momentum across the state in support of its critical provisions developed to address the Commonwealth's opioid epidemic that is claiming the lives of nearly four Bay Staters every day.

"I understand that some of our proposals disrupt the status quo. They are supposed to," **said Governor Baker**. "Our legislation aims to bend the trend on opioid misuse and provide much needed prevention and education programs, while continuing to expand access to treatment and recovery programs across the Commonwealth."

Governor Baker's legislation has garnered broad support across the Commonwealth, including the [Massachusetts Sheriffs Association](#), [District Attorneys](#), [medical students](#), [behavioral health specialists](#) and members of the law enforcement community.

"In Boston we have been working hard to address the toll that opioids are taking in our Commonwealth and preventing and treating the devastating impact of addiction

by creating the first municipal Office of Recovery Services and equipping first responders with Narcan," **said Mayor Walsh**. "But despite our efforts, and despite sound legislative action in the past, opioid overdoses continue to rise. I support this bill because I know from personal experience that to get people the help they need, we have to meet them where they are: whether that's on the street, in the hospital, at home, at work, or in school. We need to work together towards a comprehensive continuum of care, we need to tackle this crisis on all fronts."

Immediately following the Governor's panel, Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, Commissioner of Public Health Dr. Monica Bharel, Dr. Sarah Wakeman of Massachusetts General Hospital, Fred Newton of Hope House, Joanne Peterson of Learn to Cope, and Steve Tolman, president of Massachusetts AFL-CIO testified before the joint committee. Sudders described the contours of the 72-hour involuntary clinical assessment and provisions to end the longstanding practice of civilly committing women to prison, specifically at the MCI Framingham facility. She explained involuntary treatment may be appropriate under certain circumstances to prevent death, minimize harm, and hopefully provide a window of opportunity for an individual to accept treatment. Currently, more than thirty other states have involuntary commitment for addictions.

"Addiction is a chronically relapsing disease, and too often, we have relied on our courts and jails as the primary or only treatment option," **said Secretary Marylou Sudders during her testimony**. "The Governor's proposal seeks not to replace the courts, but to create an additional pathway for an initial 72 hour involuntary assessment for individuals at imminent harm as a result of addictions."

While the Baker-Polito Administration has strongly emphasized the urgency of passing this legislation, numerous reforms and investments have already been executed to begin eradicating the opioid crisis. To date, the administration has budgeted more than \$114 million in spending for substance misuse prevention, education and treatment, increased bulk purchasing of Narcan in municipalities and changed reporting requirements for the Prescription Monitoring Program from 7 days to 24 hours. One hundred and thirteen treatment beds have opened in six communities (Quincy, Plymouth, New Bedford, Boston, Westborough, Fall River) with more expected in Greenfield this winter.

Recently, the Massachusetts Medical Society and the deans of the Commonwealth's four medical schools announced a revolutionary set of medical education core competencies for the prevention and management of prescription drug misuse. This new curriculum will be taught to the over 3,000 enrolled medical students for enhanced training on prescription drug misuse.

The Baker-Polito Administration also launched their second, five-week multi-media campaign aimed at eliminating stigmas of addiction. Through radio, digital ads and billboards, each anti-stigma message is meant to reduce the impact of negative stereotypes around drug misuse through testimonials and messages to bring people out of the shadows.

A full update on the Governor's Opioid Working Group's progress can be found at: [www.mass.gov/statewithoutstigma](http://www.mass.gov/statewithoutstigma).

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