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GOVERNORTIM MURRAY  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**Media Contact**Kim Haberlin  
Bonnie McGilpin  
Chelsie Ouellette  
617-725-4025

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**GOVERNOR PATRICK FILES GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION, PROPOSES \$5 MILLION INCREASE FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

BOSTON – Wednesday, January 16, 2013 – Seeking to put an end to the gun violence that impacts too many families and neighborhoods across the Commonwealth, Governor Deval Patrick today will file commonsense gun safety legislation to enhance background checks, close licensing loopholes, reduce access to high-powered rounds of ammunition and prevent illegal firearm possession. Additionally, in the FY14 budget he files next week, the Governor will include a \$5 million increase for Department of Mental Health (DMH) programs that promote public safety and increase public awareness that mental health treatment is available and effective. Today's package builds on gun safety measures the Governor has filed over the years and coincides with the legislative momentum building here and across the country to strengthen gun laws following the tragic shootings in Newtown, CT last month.

"Both proactively, and in the wake of too many tragedies, I have filed legislation to tackle the problem of gun violence and illegal firearm possession. Today, we do so again along with an important investment in mental health programs. Mental illness is a disease that can be treated, and our communities are safer when the appropriate services and supports are available for people in need," said Governor Patrick. "I am encouraged by the palpable consensus in our Legislature that the time for action is now. All of us must pull in the same direction to bring about real change in this state and across the country."

Furthermore, the Governor looks forward to working with our state, municipal and federal partners on comprehensive gun safety legislation.

"Far too often, we are faced with grieving horrific and tragic losses of innocent lives," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "We owe it to all neighborhoods and communities to enact stronger and more responsible controls by strengthening firearm legislation in the Commonwealth. At the same time, we need to ensure that children, young adults and all residents in need have access to effective mental health services and treatment."

The Governor's comprehensive gun safety legislation is a multi-pronged approach to curb gun violence, protect families and build safer neighborhoods. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Enhance background checks by bringing Massachusetts into compliance with the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This would require the Commonwealth's courts to transmit all relevant mental health records to the Massachusetts criminal justice information system so that the federal government could include this information in a national registry all states access before issuing gun licenses.
- Close an existing loophole in order to require gun purchasers to undergo background checks at gun shows.
- Reduce access to high-powered rounds of ammunition.
- Limit the number of weapon sales by licensed dealers to not more than one per licensed individual a month. Additionally, the legislation requires private gun sales to occur at the business of a licensed dealer so that the sale can be tracked electronically and prevents the furnishing of a machine gun to any person under the age of 21.
- Amend the existing law addressing weapons on school grounds by creating tiered punishments for possessing different weapons on school property and giving police the authority to arrest without a warrant in order to quickly diffuse a dangerous situation on school property.
- Create four new crimes: assault and battery by means of a firearm, assault by means of a firearm, being a felon in possession of a firearm and commission of a violent misdemeanor while in possession of a weapon. Additionally, the bill increases the authorized minimum penalties for third and fourth offenses of illegal possession and carrying of firearms, shotguns, rifles, and machine guns and increases the maximum punishment for a second offense.

Following today's call for commonsense gun safety measures, next week the Governor will propose in his FY14 budget a 3.3% increase in DMH funding from FY13. Included in that increase is \$5 million to fund the following programs that have the greatest impact on public safety:

- \$2M for Emergency Services Program supporting Secure Mobile Capacity and Technology: Mobile Crisis teams travel to locations with individuals in crisis and provide specialized mental health services from trained responders. The increase to the personnel and technology budget will improve and expand the Commonwealth's Mobile Crisis outreach capacity, while enhancing staff safety and response times. The goal of each Mobile Crisis unit is to prevent potential harm or violence by helping individuals with mental health needs connect with treatment.
- \$1M for Mental Health Training and Consultation to School Systems: Middle and high school personnel will receive training and ongoing technical assistance to recognize symptoms of mental illness in students and to learn how to effectively address and support students with mental illness effectively.
- \$900,000 for Crisis Intervention Training (CIT): This increase more than doubles the Department's current crisis intervention training budget for law enforcement and other community-based first responders. Responders trained in CIT can better recognize, de-escalate and intervene with individuals who are in emotional distress or suffering from a mental illness and divert them to treatment they need.
- \$500,000 for the Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program: Most mental illnesses begin in childhood and early diagnosis and treatment can help keep children healthy and prevent psychiatric disability in adulthood. The Massachusetts Child Psychiatric Access Program provides access to psychiatric consultation to pediatricians for medication, treatment and referral for children who exhibit signs of behavioral or mental health concerns during pediatrics visits.

"I am very pleased to hear of this additional funding to the Department of Mental Health. I also hope that this will be only the beginning of a serious conversation about the status of our mental health system," said Senator John Keenan. "The Governor today takes an important step towards promoting public safety, but there is a need for broader conversation. Our responsibility to provide for adequate mental and behavioral health services is fundamentally about compassion for those suffering from mental and behavioral health challenges, about the families that care for them, and about the contributions they can make to our society if shown the proper care and support."

In addition to enhancing these critical services, the Governor's budget will seek to increase funding by \$100,000 for to the Center for Early Detection and Response to Risk (CEDAR) program and provide \$500,000 for a public education campaign to increase knowledge that treatment is effective and available, while reducing the stigma associated with accessing mental health services.

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