



**Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

For Immediate Release

Contact: Erin Ryan, 617-722-2430, Erin.Ryan@mahouse.gov

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Representative Kane supports bill to address state's opioid crisis through treatment, education and prevention

House adopts amendment offered by Rep. Kane on prescription drug drop boxes

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah E. Kane, R-Shrewsbury, is backing comprehensive substance abuse legislation designed to address the state's growing opioid crisis through expanded treatment, education and prevention methods.

House Bill 3944, which passed the House of Representatives on a unanimous vote of 149-0 on January 13th, sets limits on the amount of opioids that can be prescribed for acute care patients, expands the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), and mandates that hospitals conduct a clinical assessment of individuals who are brought to the emergency room after an overdose within the first 24 hours. The bill also contains provisions to ensure that students in public and charter schools have access to information on substance abuse prevention.

“Drug overdoses have claimed the lives of far too many, and opioid abuse has now reached epidemic proportions in Massachusetts,” said Representative Kane “We are taking important steps through this bill to address the scourge of substance abuse that is tearing apart families and communities, but this is really only the start of this process because there is still much work to be done on this critical public health issue.”

An average of four people die from an opioid overdose every single day in Massachusetts. According to the Department of Public Health (DPH), 263 of the state's 351 cities and towns – 3 out of every 4 communities – experienced at least one opioid-related overdose death between 2012 and 2014.

In 2014 alone, 1,089 people died from opioid use in Massachusetts, representing a 20% increase over the previous calendar year and a 63% increase over 2012. Based on data available as of October 15, 2015, DPH estimates that the total number of confirmed opioid overdose deaths in 2014 could rise as high as 1,256 once all cases are finalized.

Several amendments offered by the House Republican Caucus were adopted during the recent House debate, including a proposal by House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading) that requires the PMP to be utilized prior to the issuance of any prescription for a narcotic drug contained in schedule II or III. In 2014 alone, prescribers in Massachusetts wrote 4.4 million prescriptions and 240 million schedule II and III pills were disbursed in the Commonwealth, according to the Baker-Polito Administration. The House also adopted a Jones amendment requiring the state's boards of registration to mandate a minimum of 5 hours of training every 2 years in areas such as effective pain management,

opioid antagonists and overdose prevention treatments, as a condition for licensure for practitioners who are authorized to prescribe medications.

Also adopted was a proposal by Representative Hannah Kane that requires DPH and the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services to recommend that municipalities designate at least one prescription drug drop box where residents can safely dispose of any leftover and expired prescription drugs. These locations may include, but need not be limited to, police stations, pharmacies and local health departments.

“I am pleased that this amendment was included in the final draft of the bill voted on by the House of Representatives. It is critical that there is an accessible, safe and secure location for the disposal of opioids so that they do not find their way in to the hands of our most vulnerable citizens,” commented **Representative Kane (R-Shrewsbury)**. “It is surprising that a tool that could be helpful in reducing the circulation of opioids in our state is only employed in 212 of our 351 municipalities. I sincerely hope that the inclusion of this amendment will inspire change.”

At the request of Worcester County District Attorney Joe Early, Representative Kane serves on the Central MA Opioid Task Force, focusing on how to improve access to and success rates for substance abuse programs. The task force works with law enforcement, treatment providers and people in long term recovery programs which provide great perspective when offering recommendations to combat the complex opioid epidemic facing our state and communities. Representative Kane also serves locally on the Shrewsbury Drug Free Coalition and nationally she serves as a member of the Women in Government Mental Health and Substance Abuse Task Force, working with women legislators from across the country to resolve the opioid epidemic.

The House bill also:

- Requires that contact information for all insurers be posted on the bed-finder tool website and updates the law to ensure the site is available 24 hours a day;
- Ends the practice of sending women who are civilly committed for alcohol or substance-use disorders to MCI-Framingham;
- Ensures civil-liability protection for individuals who administer Narcan;
- Updates the training guidelines for all practitioners who prescribe controlled substances;
- Establishes the Massachusetts Council on Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Treatment, which will help the Commonwealth understand and confront addiction in a unified way.
- Limits first-time opiate prescriptions for adult outpatient use to a 7-day supply, while limiting all such prescriptions for minors to a 7-day supply;
- Requires insurers to provide coverage for mandatory “substance abuse evaluations” to be performed within 24 hours of a patient arriving at a hospital or satellite emergency facility after suffering from an apparent overdose, and for patients who have recently received Naloxone;
- Establishes a voluntary non-opiate directive form, which will allow patients to have a note inserted in their medical records and in the PMP stating they should not be offered opiate medications;

- Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in consultation with DPH, to post recommendations on its website providing guidance to public and charter schools for developing and implementing effective substance use prevention and abuse education policies, which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect best practices; and
- Requires that education materials relative to opiate misuse and abuse be provided to student athletes through the head injury safety training program, which is mandatory for all public schools subject to MIAA rules.

The bill now heads to the Senate for further action.

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