



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

February 11, 2016

Governor Dannel P. Malloy
Office of the Governor
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Martin Looney
President Pro Tempore
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Representative Brendan Sharkey
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4100
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Senator Bob Duff
Senate Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 3900
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Representative Joe Aresimowicz
House Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 4100
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Governor Malloy, President Looney, Speaker Sharkey, Senator Duff and Representative Aresimowicz:

In recent months Connecticut has seen a devastating rise in heroin abuse and opioid overdoses. It is an issue that touches all people from all walks of life across our state. It is also an issue that we need to fight by working together.

This year, state leaders must unite to combat opioid abuse in our state. Republicans are ready to work side by side with all lawmakers and stakeholders to address this serious and growing problem. We are calling for the immediate formation of a bipartisan working group including all four caucuses, the governor's office, local public health officials, substance abuse treatment providers, the Department of Public Health, the Insurance Department, police chiefs and municipal leaders. This working group should be tasked with assessing the needs of our communities to prevent and treat opioid abuse specifically. The group should also be tasked with formulating a bipartisan legislative proposal to implement a focused strategy to tackle opioid use this legislative session.

The state's Alcohol and Drug Policy Council has not taken an active role in addressing the specific problems associated with opioid abuse. They meet four times a year. We need to do more.

This cannot be a conversation among only lawmakers, just like it cannot be a conversation among only public health officials, or a conversation among only law enforcement. It must be a conversation among all stakeholders. Together we need an open dialogue.

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Governor Dannel P. Malloy has proposed legislation this year that certainly takes steps to address the effects of heroin abuse and the extreme dangers of overdosing. We look forward to hearing more about his ideas with his plan to announce details next week and open the conversation in Connecticut to include the nation's drug control policy director. We all agree that the devastating reality of overdoses occurs far too frequently and must be dealt with immediately to save lives. In addition, we must also look to address the cause of this epidemic and work together to develop policies that aim to prevent opioid abuse. We must work to treat the problem before it becomes deadly.

We have to look at what other states are doing that could work in Connecticut, such as looking at cost effective ways to make addiction treatment counselors available or on-call 24/7 to patients in emergency rooms, and defining a system to transfer patients from a hospital to the appropriate rehabilitation care program.

We have to look at what is happening with opioid prescriptions and develop ways to prevent drugs from winding up in the wrong hands.

We have to discuss obstacles deterring pharmacies from carrying naloxone.


We have to look at ways to make substance abuse treatment more affordable and accessible.

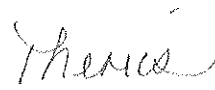
We also have to talk about education and monitoring, including out-of-state monitoring capabilities to better control opioid prescriptions and properly manage care.

We applaud Governor Malloy, as well as State Representative Roberta Willis, for putting forward multiple legislative ideas to start the conversation. Now it is time for lawmakers and invested stakeholders to have an opportunity to work collaboratively. We may not have all the answers, but collectively we can address this public health crisis. We must act now.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,


Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader


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House Republican Leader