

# **2016 Stronger Together Talking Points and FAQ on Addiction and Substance Abuse**

September 22nd, 2016

## **Core Message**

Communities throughout Massachusetts continue to be deeply affected by the opioid epidemic. Our state Democratic leaders have led the nation in approaching addiction as a public health problem, not a simply a criminal one. They understand the complexity of the crisis and continue to fight against it through comprehensive plans that support education, prevention, treatment, and recovery. We need a president who will fight alongside us, who understands addiction as a disease, and who creates compassionate and comprehensive solutions.

Hillary Clinton knows that drug and alcohol addiction must be treated as a disease, not as a moral failure. She is committed to combat the deadly epidemic of drug and alcohol addiction with a \$10 billion comprehensive prevention and treatment initiative.

Trump's punitive approach criminalizes those affected by addiction and substance abuse instead of helping them heal. His narrow focus on building an infeasible border wall fails to recognize addiction as a public health crisis, overlooks addiction that begins through legally obtained prescription painkillers, and ignores the need to treat those who suffer from addiction.

## **Massachusetts is Disproportionately Affected by the Opioid Addiction Epidemic**

- Massachusetts is disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic. Heroin overdose rates are more than twice the national average, and deaths from prescription opioids are not far behind.
- After prescription opioid overdoses increased by over 90% between 2013 and 2014, Governor Patrick declared the opioid addiction epidemic a public health emergency, allocating \$20 million to treatment and recovery services.
- In response to the crisis, Democratic leaders passed legislation allowing all first responders in the state to carry and administer naloxone, and opioid overdose reversal tool.
- The legislature and Governor Patrick continued the fight against addiction requiring insurers to pay for up to 14 days of inpatient care for those being treated for addiction.
- In March of 2016, the Democratically-led legislature unanimously passed the Act Relative to Substance Use, Treatment, Education and Prevention. This law placed a seven-day limit on opiate prescriptions, with exceptions for those suffering from chronic pain.
- The law also requires opiate prescriptions to be checked through the state's prescription monitoring program, both by the medical professional issuing the prescription and the pharmacist filling it.
- Recently, Mayor Walsh launched a 311 hotline to offer addiction recovery services in Boston.
- Stemming from the Democratic leadership on this crisis, Massachusetts also recently launched the online Mass. Prescription Awareness Tool (MassPAT) to prevent over-prescription and addiction by monitoring prescriptions signed by all doctors.

## **Hillary is Committed to a Comprehensive Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Plan**

- Clinton will empower communities to implement preventive programming for adolescents about drug use and addiction.

- She will ensure that every person suffering from drug or alcohol addiction can obtain the comprehensive, ongoing treatment he or she needs, and stay in recovery.
- Clinton believes that naloxone, a rescue drug that stops opioid overdoses from becoming fatal, must be in the basic toolkit for every first responder.
- She will require licensed prescribers to have a minimum amount of training and to consult a prescription drug monitoring program before writing a prescription for controlled medications.
- Clinton will also prioritize rehabilitation and treatment over prison for low-level and nonviolent drug offenses and end the era of mass incarceration.

### **Trump Leaves Those Battling Addiction With No Support**

- In the U.S., overdose deaths involving painkillers have quadrupled in the past 15 years, outnumbering overdoses from heroin and cocaine combined. Yet, Trump has no plan that accounts for addiction to prescription painkillers.
- Rather than recognizing addiction as a public health concern, Trump's vision is a shortsighted, punitive approach that will leave those suffering with no path towards recovery.
- Trump's only plan to combat drug addiction is to build an infeasible border wall.
- Trump has campaigned with Maine Governor LePage, who vetoed a bill that would have increased access to naloxone, a rescue drug that stops opioid overdoses from becoming fatal. LePage expressed concern that saving drug users would send the wrong message. The only message he sent is that he will not offer support to people suffering from addiction.
- LePage has also made numerous racist generalizations, blaming communities of color for the opioid epidemic. He has endorsed Donald Trump.