



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2016

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House Passes Substance Addiction Legislation

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts House of Representatives to pass substance abuse legislation. The bill limits first-time opiate prescriptions to seven days and creates new standards to evaluate and treat patients who present in emergency rooms with an apparent overdose. 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.

“Opiate addiction in Massachusetts is a public health crisis,” said Representative Smola. “This is an issue which affects families in every town and every district. I was proud to vote for the passage of this extremely important piece of legislation as I believe it provides critical resources and procedures needed to address this situation.”

Representative Smola also supported a proposal that would allow overdose victims to be involuntarily committed at a hospital or drug treatment facility for an initial three day period to receive emergency treatment. Despite unanimous support from the House Republican Caucus, the amendment was defeated. Massachusetts law currently permits the emergency restraint and hospitalization of individuals who pose a risk of serious harm by reason of mental illness, but not for those suffering from substance abuse.

Other measures included in the bill include a requirement that all public schools have a substance abuse education policy; updates training guidelines for all practitioners who prescribe controlled substances; prohibits sending women civilly committed for drug or alcohol treatment to the Framingham state prison; requires that practitioners check the state’s prescription monitoring database each time they prescribe opiates; and establishes the Massachusetts Council on Substance Use Disorder and Treatment, which will help the Commonwealth understand and confront addiction in a unified way.

The bill passed the House unanimously and now moves to the Senate.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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