



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage

GOVERNOR

August 5, 2015

Mike Thibodeau, President
Maine Senate
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0003

Mark Eves, Speaker
Maine House of Representatives
3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0003

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker,

The national and state media is finally paying attention to Maine's drug crisis, and we are hearing stories on a daily basis about overdoses from heroin and other opiates. You must take action now to stop the flow of this deadly poison into our state.

A story in The Washington Post chronicled Maine's heroin crisis and a young man from Falmouth who died last year from a heroin overdose. The Maine media just reported on 14 overdoses from heroin and other opiates within a 24 hour-period in Portland.

As a parent, the stories of good families destroyed by heroin addiction and Mainers killed by powerful drugs peddled by out-of-state traffickers struck close to home. Ann and I worry about young Mainers and how heroin addiction can tear a family apart, regardless of social status or parenting efforts.

How many more Mainers must die before you commit the resources we need to fight this drug epidemic? Deaths from heroin quadrupled from seven in 2011 to 28 in 2012, then went up to 34 in 2013 and surged to 57 last year. Even more alarming is the rising number of overdose deaths involving fentanyl, which is 40 times stronger than heroin and is often combined with heroin without the user's knowledge. Fentanyl-related deaths have increased dramatically from 9 to 43 from 2011 to 2014.

Gangs are trafficking these deadly drugs in our state, using other New England states as their operating base. We need to go after the dealers—not the addicts.

The Maine Drug Enforcement Agency is working around the clock to lock up these dealers of death, and we often see their results in the news with drug bust after drug bust. However, they need much more help.

I have repeatedly asked the legislature to pay for 14 new agents to crack down on drug dealers,



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to no avail. Then we asked for seven agents, but you only gave us four—mainly so you can tell the media you are doing something to address the problem. Sadly, this lack of commitment shows you are more interested in playing politics than actually stopping the drug epidemic that is killing our young people.

It's true that we can't just arrest our way out of this problem. For those who are addicted to deadly opiates like heroin, there is help. DHHS has money available for drug treatment, even for those who don't have Medicaid or private insurance. We have the resources to help those who need it. We have increased funding for addiction treatment from \$7 million to \$17 million since I've been Governor.

Now it's time to dedicate the adequate resources we need to fund the law enforcement side of the problem. I will be convening a group of top officials from state, local and federal law enforcement agencies to discuss what resources we need, where they need to be deployed and how to get them into action immediately.

I urge you to make these resources available as soon as possible. We must do everything we can—as fast as we can—to save the Maine people from these deadly drugs. Without a stronger effort from law enforcement, future victims could be someone you know or even one of your loved ones.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor