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Senate of Pennsylvania

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TO: All Senators

DATE: December 29, 2010

FROM: Senator Michael J. Stack

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SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship of Legislation

In the near future, **I will reintroduce Senate Bill 1294 of the 2009-10 Session**, to provide for the safe use of methadone to treat heroin and other opiate addictions. Methadone use and abuse has been growing over the last decade. According to federal statistics, the number of prescriptions written for methadone has increased by 700% over the last 10 years.

The increased use of methadone has been accompanied by a methadone abuse increase. Most patients develop an addiction to methadone and methadone withdrawal can be more severe than heroin withdrawal. Methadone can also cause deaths. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 4,462 methadone-related deaths in 2005, representing an increase of 468% since 1999. These deaths include fatal drug interactions and automobile accidents caused by methadone patients.

In order to ensure methadone is used in a safe and effective manner, I am introducing the Methadone Addiction Prevention and Treatment Act (MAPTA). Narcotic treatment programs and individuals will follow practices and procedures to ensure the safe and effective use of methadone. These procedures include:

- Pre-treatment eligibility standards, including screening for other health conditions and medications that preclude the use of methadone.
- A standardized patient intake process that includes: program-to-patient disclosure of alternative addiction treatment methods and methadone risks.
- The preliminary treatment plan shall include a methadone to abstinence schedule. The purpose of this schedule is to prevent methadone addiction, abuse, reduce and eliminate a patient's methadone use over a two-to-three year period. The Department of Health Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs can provide exceptions to the abstinence schedule when it's in the patient's best interest.

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- Each narcotic treatment program shall provide a minimum of two hours of counseling a week to patients using methadone. The frequency of counseling may be reduced after three months if the patient has followed all program rules and goals, and a physician has determined it is in the best interest of a patient.

- The narcotic treatment program shall administer a drug screening test upon intake and every two weeks after admission. The screening will protect the patient and the public by ensuring that the patient is not abusing other drugs.

- A patient using methadone will be prohibited from operating a vehicle during the first two weeks of methadone use unless approved by the narcotic treatment program's medical director. If a patient tests positive for other illegal drugs or alcohol, they shall be prohibited from operating a vehicle for one month unless approved by the narcotic treatment program's medical director.

- Requires narcotic treatment programs to develop methadone diversion reduction plans, requires the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Treatment programs to review the plans, conduct inspections, and issue regulations requiring programs to implement best practices.

- A narcotic treatment program may provide take home methadone to a patient if it is consistent with the patient's treatment plan and a physician has made a good faith estimate that it will improve the patient's addiction treatment and will not be diverted or abused. Patients that have diverted or abused methadone are not eligible for take-home privileges for three months. Following a three month suspension, take home privileges may be reinstated if the patient has followed all rules and take home privileges are approved by the narcotic treatment program's medical director.

- Allows drug-free addiction treatment programs to remain drug-free.

- Gives drug and alcohol treatment programs the authority to discharge patients who engage in methadone diversion, violence, or threats of violence. Also, requires treatment programs to honor patient requests for transfer to another facility within seven days.

- The Division of Drug and Alcohol Program Licensure may assess a fine of \$1,000 for each violation of the act and all violations shall be posted to the department's publicly accessible website.

Previous co-sponsors included Senators Alloway, Eichelberger, Fontana, Greenleaf, O'Pake, Rafferty, Ward, Don White and Mary Jo White.

If you have any questions or would like to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact my office at 7-9608.