

From: del Pozo, Brandon [mailto:bdelpozo@bpdvt.org]
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2018 9:36 PM
To: Kayla Dewey
Subject: testimony re: s.166 as written

Dear Senators of the Committee on Institutions:

In 2016, Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo set a goal that I have yet to hear in Vermont. She told the people she served that she was committed to reducing fatal opioid overdoses in her state by 1/3 in three years. A small group of experts authored a [tightly-focused strategic plan](#) with deliverables that showed how she intended to achieve her goal. At the heart of it was bringing medication-assisted treatment to every prisoner in Rhode Island who needed it. “We have a single focus in this work,” [she declared](#): “Save lives.”

As a result, Rhode Island became the first state in the nation to offer medication assisted-treatment to all of its prisoners, and it [reduced their fatal overdoses by over 60%](#). While Vermont’s death toll from opioids rose in 2017, Rhode Island saw its overall opioid overdose death rate *decrease*.

To verify the program’s promise, I travelled to personally meet with Rhode Island’s [director of public health](#), the [doctor who implemented the program](#) in the state’s prisons, the [Brown researcher](#) who authored its evaluation, and the [principal public health expert](#) behind the state’s strategy. This is what they had to say: there is nothing left to “study” about MAT in prison. It works extremely well. There is clear [proof](#) that medication is the most effective component of addiction therapy. There is evidence that [MAT in prison saves lives](#). Someone who says that giving prisoners medication is like “preventing mass shootings by giving everyone a gun” is [ignoring science](#) and by some estimates espousing a [dangerous point of view](#).

We need to make a firm commitment to screening every prisoner in Vermont, inducting the ones who are struggling with addiction into treatment, and enacting such a program without delay. We are at the point where another year of ignoring the recommendations of medical science—people I talk to who have been around say this would be the sixth—will not only once again cost some Vermonters their lives, it will make us look like we are ignoring the innovative, lifesaving work of our New England neighbors. That is not a distinction we should have to bear as people who account to Vermonters for their safety and welfare.

Thank you for considering my point of view. I urge you to vote for the passage S.166 as introduced. I would be pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this matter further, and I’d like to thank you for everything you do in service to our state and its people.

Sincerely,
Brandon del Pozo
Chief of Police
Burlington, Vermont



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