



The Drug Policy Forum of Massachusetts

Testimony of Whitney A. Taylor, Executive Director Drug Policy Forum of Massachusetts — July 18, 2005

In Favor of H. 3127 — An Act Increasing Public Safety by Ensuring Access to Substance Abuse Treatment in front of the Mental Health & Substance Abuse Committee

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Honorable Chairs and Committee Members, I am here to testify in favor of Representative Rushing's bill H. 3127 on the development of a statewide, uniform system to identify and treat individuals in need of substance abuse services who have no other means to access services. This legislation will be of great benefit to the Commonwealth by creating eligibility guidelines for persons to receive state-sponsored treatment services. This process will allow the Department of Public Health (DPH) to get a clear picture of the population in need, plan for treatment expansion accordingly, and streamline the delivery of all services to the Commonwealth's most disenfranchised citizens.

The Drug Policy Forum of Massachusetts (DPFMA) promotes the expansion of treatment services in all capacities. We believe that the most cost effective and beneficial treatment services are provided in the community before an individual's addiction causes them to commit crimes beyond their illicit substance use. While DPH and other city agencies across the state currently offer services for the uninsured and MassHealth ineligible — treatment funding cuts backs have caused these programs to dwindle into long waiting lists for services.

With the passage of H.3127 there will be legislative support for the much needed reinstatement and expansion of treatment and other social service programs. These services will ensure long-term savings — for every \$1 invested in addiction treatment there is a \$7 savings to the taxpayers according to the RAND Corporation. Additionally, by providing services for this population the Commonwealth can help disrupt the cycle of addiction and crime across generations.

DPFMA encourages DPH and the legislature to create eligibility guidelines that do not create unintended barriers for persons in need of addiction services. This could be ensured by including experts in homelessness, employment services, wrap-around social services and community health.

I urge the good members of this Committee to support H. 3127 — this legislation will prove beneficial to Massachusetts both in human and long-term fiscal savings. Thank you for the opportunity to present on this important subject.

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