



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON, MA 02133
(617) 725-4000

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

March 7, 2016

Northshore Recovery High School Community,

Let me start by applauding you for taking the steps to face this disease, seeking treatment and recovery in order to not let addiction define you. The stories you the students, alumni and teachers of Northshore Recovery High School are sharing are courageous, and critically important as we all work to save lives and raise awareness.

When I decided to run for Governor, I did not expect addiction and opioids would be such major topics on the campaign trail. That changed as I traveled across Massachusetts and heard tragic stories from those in recovery, as well as the parents, siblings, and friends whose lives have been devastated by an addiction that started with prescription drugs. For more than a year now, my administration has made the prevention and treatment of addiction a top priority, and two of the themes highlighted in your letters have been at the forefront of our efforts.

First, we are working with the legislature, state regulators and the medical community to better control the flow of prescription painkillers. This is being accomplished right now through an enhanced prescription drug monitoring program, as well as first-in-the-nation programs in the Commonwealth's medical and dental schools to prepare students to know the risks and identify the signs of addiction. We have also filed legislation to limit the amount of pills that can be given in a first-time prescription, among other policy reforms. The bill remains with the legislature, but they have committed to taking action soon.

The second theme is removing the stigma of addiction. Addiction is a chronic illness, not a moral failure. Last year, we launched our #StateWithoutStigMA campaign. Though we have made a concerted effort, your letters speak to the fact that much more needs to be done. The stigmas and attitudes towards those struggling with Substance Use Disorder weren't formed overnight, but we are committed to teaching compassion, and providing opportunities for care and treatment. Stigmas and biases should not prevent



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON, MA 02133
(617) 725-4000

CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

people from getting into treatment or hold them back from recovery, stability and success.

There is no better case to be made for Recovery High Schools than the stories that you have bravely written and shared on Facebook. "This recovery school saved my life." "For me, the supportive staff, the peers who are going through similar issues, and the opportunity to better myself are just a few reasons why this schools is a good place for me." "We give our students the love and support they need to survive and thrive." "I have seen the incredible success of once suffering addicts during my time at Northshore Recovery High School."

The budget I signed last year provided Recovery High Schools with \$3.1 million in funding, including \$1 million to create at least two new schools, and we have proposed the same funding this year. Our legislation also tackles one of the problems that several of you mentioned in your letters: transportation costs related to students getting to and from the school they need. Our bill requires the Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a transportation plan for students who attend a recovery high school. Be assured that my administration is advocating for this important proposal as legislators debate our bill.

Again, I applaud you on your recovery, and encourage you to continue to share your stories. Combatting this epidemic is a team effort. Together we can bend the trend, reverse the stigma, and save lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Baker".

Charles D. Baker
Governor