



c/o Boston ASAP – 2nd floor, 29 Winter Street,
Boston, MA 02108
June 9, 2015

**To Judiciary Chairs: Senator William N. Brownsberger
House Chair, John V. Fernandes
and Judiciary Committee Members**

MOAR is a statewide recovery community association activating its mission to organize recovering individuals, families, and friends into a collective voice educating the public about the value of recovery from alcohol and other addictions.

MOAR envisions a society where addiction is treated as a significant public health issue and

“Recovery is recognized as valuable to our communities.”

MOAR collaborates with allied organizations to improve prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

**We support Families Against Mandatory Minimum proposals
put forth by Representative Swan and Senator Cynthia Creem**

H1620, S786 An Act to Repeal Mandatory Minimum Sentencing Laws for Drug Offenses This bill would repeal all mandatory minimums for drug offenses and instead let courts impose a sentence that fits the crime. It would also make all drug offenders serving mandatory minimums when the bill is enacted eligible for parole, work release and earned good time.

Drug addiction is behind much of the crime that harms our communities and fills up our prisons. Yet after three decades of mandatory and often lengthy sentences for drug offenders, we are no better off. In fact, the situation is worse. New drugs have come on the scene, such as crack cocaine and prescription drugs like OxyContin, which is highly addictive and when unavailable is often replaced with heroin. Between 2000 and 2014, there have been close to 9000 fatal overdoses.

We are losing this battle on the home front. Yet our laws have only created a revolving door for drug offenders that is paid for with taxpayers' money. The chemical imbalance caused by addiction makes a

person risk all without moral or value. Under the influence of drugs, a person will steal to get money, sell drugs to others and even sell their own bodies. Without an intervention, a person who only knows life under addiction, is going to leave in the same mind set. They return to their same behavior.

Some prisoners are able to get into good programs, but getting access without support is very challenging. Currently there is minimal post-release recovery support available that allows ex-offenders to take the next steps in living drug free — that support needs to grow.

Instead, we are mainly spending our money to warehouse these men and women. Or worse, we put them in an environment where they learn even more anti-social behavior from hardened criminals. There is also enormous wear and tear on the families of these prisoners. They worry about their loved ones' well-being in terms of their addiction, what might happen to them while in prison and how prison may make a bad situation even worse. There is also great turmoil and stress over the lack of justice, given the disproportionately harsh sentences for drug offenders. We should use prisons for those who actually threaten our public safety. For those who don't, drug courts or other alternative sentencing with recovery support should be used more often. There can be great results when everyone is working together, using sanctions and rewards in constructive ways.

A real example of alternative sentencing is Reflections Court Alternative Program, the only one in Massachusetts. It provides 90 days of residential treatment AND 9 months of community based case management. As of the end of the end of second quarter FY2015, the completion rate of the residential portion of the program was 61.45% and of the yearlong program the completion rate was 61.3%. Clients who do not complete the full year are in violation of probation, It is determined by probation whether or not they are returned to incarceration or allowed to pursue further treatment. There have been very few clients who have reoffended and picked up new charges. All clients have received and education and gained knowledge and coping skills that assist in maintaining a life void of criminal behavior and substance abuse.

Physical recovery must come first. Helping a person build a life in recovery requires long term treatment with recovery support services.

Then the person can build in the capacity for a job, housing, and education. We must break our own cycle of dependency on incarceration and build in rehabilitation to prevent recidivism.

Thank you for all considerations.

Sincerely yours,



Maryanne Frangules
MOAR Executive Director
617-423-6627