

STATEMENT

OF

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Manchester Police Department**

**BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**“ALL HANDS ON DECK: WORKING TOGETHER TO END
THE TRAFFICKING AND ABUSE OF PRESCRIPTION
OPIOIDS, HEROIN, AND FENTANYL”
SEPTEMBER 14, 2015**

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee today. It is an honor to be able to share with you what Manchester's officers are dealing with on a daily basis with regard to the abuse of prescription opioids and heroin. In addition, the role of fentanyl in fatal overdoses is truly alarming.

When I took over as Chief of Police in July, I expressed that two of my top priorities were to deal with our city's heroin problem and to support and boost morale among the ranks of the Manchester Police Department. These two priorities are effectively interrelated at this point—our department's officers are out there every day trying to save lives and make our community safe, and today far too often heroin is the direct or indirect cause of any one public safety or health issue in Manchester. At a time when we are asking the most of our officers, I am fighting for additional support and resources to support their work.

Drug abuse is undoubtedly taking a toll on our city. Every single day, officers are dealing with overdose victims. They are dealing with drug traffickers. There's also the intangible "quality of life" issue that drug abuse presents to us.

It is the mission of the Manchester Police Department to serve the greater good by protecting life, property and the liberties of Manchester's residents and the community at large. Sadly, the quality of life in Manchester is suffering from the scourge of prescription opioid and heroin abuse.

In Manchester alone, overdose deaths so far have increased 90 percent over 2014, and 269 percent over 2013. In all of 2014, MPD seized 1,314 grams of heroin. As of July, MPD had seized over 27,000 grams of heroin in 2015. That's an enormous increase in seizures.

We must do more and we must do it now. At the same time, we must recognize this problem for what it is: a public safety and a public health issue. It certainly has been said before, but we won't be able to arrest our way out of this problem. Treatment and support for recovery are critical to our work in law enforcement.

On August 3, the City of Manchester announced a 60-day action plan to help fight this epidemic. I worked with Manchester Fire Chief Jim Burkush—whose department is facing the everyday reality of this problem just as MPD is—in addition to Manchester Health Director, Tim Soucy. Our plan made recommendations that generally fell into four categories: (1) reduce heroin and prescription opioids through physician education, expansion of Suboxone access, drop boxes and police support; (2) save the life of overdose patients by using Narcan, treatment options for every overdose victim, recovery coaches to work with those suffering from a substance use disorder, a Superior Court drug court in Manchester; (3) educate children and parents through appropriate-aged programs, a letter to parents to help them identify drug use, a city web page devoted to overdose statistics, prevention and resources, long-term recommendations for treatment, housing and employment; and (4) develop a continuum of care by mapping

all community assets devoted to drug-addiction programs and allowing an addict to enter the system at any point along the continuum.

While this 60-day action plan is still ongoing, I am confident we are moving in the right direction and our experiences will help inform our long-term efforts to help fight this epidemic.

Thank you. I am happy to address any questions.