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ADVOCATES APPLAUD THE LEGISLATURE'S OPIOID BILL

Boston, MA (March 10, 2016)- The Addictions Free Future Project, led by the Children's Mental Health Campaign, applauds the Legislature for passing its comprehensive Opioid Bill, which includes important preventative measures. The bill has been passed by the House and Senate and is on its way to the Governor's desk.

Among the prevention initiatives laid out in the bill is a verbal screening tool to be implemented in schools across the Commonwealth for students in two different grade levels. Screening and counseling are well-established best practices for helping young people avoid substance use. The strategy is endorsed by the Massachusetts School Nurse Organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Leading legislative and community advocates lauded the provisions passage.

"We need to make smart investments in prevention and early intervention. Screening in schools is a cost-effective and evidence-based way to ensure students get connected to the services they need," said Senator Jennifer Flanagan (D-Worcester and Middlesex) who was a lead negotiator on the final bill.

"We need to bring screenings to all communities across the Commonwealth so more kids have access to preventative services to help end the cycle of addiction" said Representative Kay Khan, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

"Today, the legislature took concrete steps to preventing or reducing drug and alcohol use by teens. Supporting youth to make healthy decisions and getting them help if they need is the best way to prevent addiction and all of its devastating consequences. The positive impact of this effort will be felt for generations to come." said Mary McGeown, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a member of the project's leadership team.

"Insuring that every adolescent has the opportunity for a private conversation about substance use with a trained healthcare professional has tremendous potential to prevent the consequences that we know all too well: injuries, mental health problems, school problems and addiction to name just a few. As the country struggles to address the opioid epidemic Massachusetts is leading the way!" said Sharon Levy, Director of the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program and Boston Children's Hospital.

About the Addiction Free Futures Project

The Addiction Free Futures Project is funded through a three-year, \$2.5 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The project's leadership team includes: the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC); Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL); Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR); Learn to Cope; Massachusetts Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment – Training & Technical Assistance (MASBIRT-TTA) ; Health Care for All (HCFA); HOPE Coalition of Worcester (Healthy Options for Prevention and Education); Students Against Destructive Decisions, MA Chapter (SADD); and The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds.

About the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC):

The CMHC is an innovative children's mental health system reform effort led by five partner organizations – Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Children's Hospital Boston, Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Health Care For All, and Health Law Advocates – and uniting more than 140 organizations in mental health, healthcare law, child welfare, family advocacy, and health policy into a dynamic coalition working together for systemic change.