



Contact:
Richard Baker
rbaker@vpi.org
P: 617-927-0836 x188

PRESS RELEASE

CITIZENS TAKE ACTION AT FIRST EVER HEP C DAY ON THE HILL

Boston (April 17, 2018) – In the midst of the opioid crisis, another, closely-related but often overlooked epidemic is quietly taking its toll. Hepatitis C, a blood-borne, viral infection that attacks the liver and can live in the body undetected for years, is on the rise among young, injection drug users. There are more than 100,000 confirmed cases of Hepatitis C here in Massachusetts, however, with an estimated 60-70% of infected individuals unaware of their status, most experts agree the actual number is much higher. Now, more than ever, increasing funding for testing and surveillance services is critically important.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2018, EndHepCMA, a statewide coalition of organizations, providers, advocates and consumers, worked with Senator Mark Montigny to organize a first-of-its-kind education and advocacy day at the Massachusetts State House to connect concerned citizens with their legislators to discuss policy related to better addressing Hepatitis C. More than 75 people attended a speaking program featuring EndHepCMA Coalition Coordinator, Richard Baker; Citizen Advocate and Boston Living Center Program Director, Larry Day; and Massachusetts Department of Public Health Epidemiologist, Dan Church on the current state of Hepatitis C here in the commonwealth. Staff from the offices of Senator Sal DiDomenico, Senator John Keenan, and event co-sponsor Senator Mark Montigny, as well as Representative William Crocker, Representative William Galvin, Representative Stephen Hay, Representative Kay Khan, Representative Jack Lewis, Representative Jeffery Sánchez, and Representative Theodore Speliotis. After the speaking program, attendees were encouraged to visit the offices of their regional representatives to share support for maintaining funding for Hepatitis C prevention, education, and treatment.

Advocates were pleased to learn that the Massachusetts House Ways and Means Committee has approved level funding at \$30.8 million for fiscal year 2018, however, truly turning the tide on the epidemic will require additional resources for tracking new infections, educating the public about risk factors, and increasing prevention services and treatment access in the communities where it matters most. Hepatitis C, untreated, can be deadly, claiming more lives than the next 60 infectious diseases combined each year. With proper diagnosis and treatment, however, the disease is curable and dedicating resources towards preventing new infections could eventually eliminate the disease entirely.

For more information about the EndHepCMA Coalition please visit: www.vpi.org/endhepcma



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About the EndHepCMA Coalition

The EndHepCMA Coalition is a collaborative effort of organizations, providers, advocates, and consumers working to

achieve the elimination of Hepatitis C in Massachusetts. The objectives of the Coalition include developing and cultivating relationships between community leaders, policy makers, providers, people living with or at risk of Hepatitis C, and others who address this population; advocating for expanded prevention, testing and health care for those living with or at risk of contracting Hepatitis C; collaborating to strengthen existing services, programs, and policies; and educating members and key stakeholders about Hepatitis C.