



Essex County Correctional Facility  
&  
Sheriff's Headquarters



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SHERIFF

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Chief Leonard Campanello  
Chief of Police, City of Gloucester  
197 Main Street  
Gloucester, MA 01930

  
Dear Chief Campanello:

It was a pleasure meeting with you on May 26, 2015 to discuss the City of Gloucester's initiative to change the strategy of dealing with the scourge of drugs in the City. I commend you for your leadership, forward thinking and your efforts to bring this important issue to the forefront.

As the Sheriff of Essex County, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating toll that substances abuse has exacted in the lives of many individuals in Essex County. Almost 90 percent of the individuals incarcerated in Essex County, and throughout the Commonwealth, have some substance abuse issue. For court ordered clients and those arrested for drug use, detoxification often occurs in the jail.

Not all individuals needing detoxification are in the criminal justice system. The challenges of addressing addiction, finding available resources, the stress and destructiveness of the curse on the family and loved ones, cry out for action.

I recently assisted a family in crisis in Newburyport in a non-criminal context. Finding a suitable detoxification bed was a challenge, even for someone like myself who has knowledge of the system. On this particular day, there were only two beds available in Essex County. Fortunately, the individual was admitted to a facility in Tewksbury.

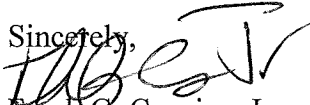
The fiscal benefit of cuts made to detoxification beds over the past decade may have just shifted the financial burden to our correctional facilities, hospitals and other agencies. At a time of fundamental changes to our healthcare and insurance systems and the continued economic stress on government to do more with less it is time to take bold steps forward. The creation and funding of new detoxification beds may provide alternatives to addicts becoming incarcerated and may provide a more stable environment for these individuals over the long term.

Jail overcrowding is impacted by significant increases in pre-trial population and the lack of detoxification beds in the community. An opiate epidemic is raging in Essex County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Essex County Sheriff's Department intends to create a detoxification facility that will provide immediate care and detoxification treatment for offenders and take steps to address the evils of drugs in our communities.

More funding for programs for treatment and programming inside and outside of the criminal justice system will also better prepare individuals to reenter our communities after incarceration or avoid incarceration altogether with an enhanced chance of coping with their issues as they transition through the continuum of care.

For years the system has waged an expensive and prolonged war on drugs that has resulted in our prisons and jails busting at the seams. It is encouraging that new ideas and strategies are emerging that will strike a thoughtful balance between public safety and treatment. Not every idea is perfect from the start. I am encouraged by the recognition that the problem of the drug epidemic has to be addressed in a collaborative and constructive manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank G. Cousins, Jr.", written over the typed name.

Frank G. Cousins, Jr.  
Sheriff

The Essex County Sheriff's Department (ECSD) houses all pre-trial inmates for Essex County as well as sentenced inmates of minor felonies, and all misdemeanors. We also have contracts to house state and federal inmates. Our combined inmate count between the Middleton House of Correction, Essex County Pre-Release and Re-entry Center and the Women in Transition Center is 1471 inmates with 585 pretrial and 886 sentenced inmates.

Essex County has 34 communities with a population of 762,550. The demographics of the total population of inmates served during the current fiscal year were approximately 37.9 % white; 6.8% Black/African-American; 35% Asian; 28.8% Latino/Hispanic; 25.8% other; and 28% unknown.

The loss of detoxification beds over the past decade has had a profound impact on our Commonwealth's families, hospital emergency rooms and our correctional facilities. The scarceness of beds creates a ripple effect of crisis that in some cases perpetuates a vicious circle for addicts and their loved ones.

- **Jail overcrowding is impacted by significant increases in pre-trial population and the lack of detoxification beds in the community.**
- **Essex County is the highest populated county correctional department in the Commonwealth.**
- **We intend to create a detoxification facility that will provide immediate care and detoxification treatment for offenders and take steps to address the evils of drugs in our communities.**
- **An opiate epidemic is raging in Essex County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**
- **This new initiative will SAVE LIVES!**

**This tool may provide an alternative to addicts becoming incarcerated for longer periods of time. Offenders could be sent to this detoxification facility for a period of 2-3 weeks and receive treatment and be stabilized and then return to court for the judge to further evaluate and decide the offender's pretrial status.**

**For example, a judge could consider day reporting to our minimum security facility or home confinement on GPS. Ideally, the individual could receive supervised release instead of being returned to jail.**

**We are confident that this new facility may produce a measurable reduction in the incarceration of pretrial offenders.**

### **Building on Resources and Relationships**

The new beds may provide alternatives to addicts becoming incarcerated for longer periods of time and may provide a more stable environment for these individuals over the long term.

We will create a program that will (1) directly address the epidemic of drugs in our communities, (2) provide the court with an alternative to a longer pre-trial incarceration, (3) provide access to treatment and services for offenders and (4) create a tool for the court to use before a decision is made whether to allow the individual to receive a sanction short of pre-trial incarceration.

The new secure unit will be run by substance-abuse treatment professionals, within the confines of the jail. We will consider expanding the contract with our current healthcare provider, or contracting with a new provider to staff the facility.

### **Race and Economic Status**

Minorities and the poor lack resources to address substance abuse detoxification in settings outside of the criminal justice system. Many times the only opportunity to address the scourge of addiction is when these individuals enter the criminal justice system.

- **Our initiative will utilize the existing tools available to the Sheriff and fortify our efforts to champion a change of law to allow pretrial offenders to get services from our Offices of Community Corrections.**

### **Authority of the Sheriff**

*Current State of the Law:* Section 20B of Chapter 217 of the Massachusetts General Laws provides the sheriff with the power and discretion to assign certain detainees to a pre-trial diversion program. The proposed target population of our new initiative are offenders that would be eligible to be classified to a pretrial diversion program under the statute.

Efforts are also underway to amend M.G.L. Chapter 211F allowing pre-trial offenders to be eligible for services (drug testing, day reporting, programming) at Offices of Community Corrections. Currently, only sentenced inmates are eligible for services. The change in Chapter 211F is consistent with efforts to address the epidemic of substance abuse in our communities.

### **Leveraging Resources and Enhancing Partnerships**

We propose to seek funding for the Commonwealth for the capital expenses to create a detoxification facility within the Middleton jail. We envision that funding from the MacArthur Foundation grant would pay for the operational costs of medical and professional staff.

- **The opiate crisis and impact of substance abuse on pretrial populations in jails are the forefront of public policy discussions and the focus of an agenda for action.**