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PRESS RELEASE

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D.A. McMahon and Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan: Columbia University Capstone Report Reveals Scope of Staten Island's Opioid Epidemic, Addresses Serious Gaps in Local Treatment Options

Independent academic report finds opioid addiction in the borough transcends age, race, location, and socioeconomic status; some areas with the most overdoses are also the most underserved in terms of treatment clinics

Staten Island, N.Y. – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York Bridget G. Brennan today released the findings of a Columbia University capstone research report that analyzes the scope of opioid addiction on Staten Island and addresses the borough's lack of widely available treatment options. The independent academic report, entitled "*Staten Island Needs Assessment: Opioid Addiction Prevention and Treatment System of Care*," was compiled by graduate student researchers at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. The study was facilitated by the offices of District Attorney McMahon and Special Narcotics Prosecutor Brennan as well as the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness (SIPCW).

"As the opioid crisis on Staten Island continues to claim lives at a staggering pace, we must do everything in our power to take down the dealers peddling this poison and also ensure that people who suffer from addiction illness have access to the type of treatment services they need," said **District Attorney Michael E. McMahon**. "As detailed in this report, opioid addiction affects every neighborhood and cuts across all social lines in the borough, and it will require an all-hands on deck approach to finally put an end to it and save lives. While we have already made progress on the island with our Overdose Response Initiative and the HOPE program, there is still much work to be done before we can declare victory. In line with some of the recommendations put forth by this talented group of students, this office has also implemented an island-wide awareness campaign that includes a user friendly website, SIHOPE.org, to find treatment services and other valuable resources. We will continue to work together with our partners in law enforcement, our elected leaders, and treatment providers to take the necessary steps toward turning the tide on this devastating epidemic and creating a healthier and safer borough."

McMahon continued, “I would like to thank the students and faculty at Columbia University for their time and effort researching this important issue and for providing us with a thorough guide to better understand this crisis. I also must thank Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan and the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness for their tireless efforts in combating this crisis.”

New York City’s Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan said, “I would like to thank Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, District Attorney Michael E. McMahon and the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office, treatment providers and Staten Island residents and their families who have struggled with substance abuse issues for participating in this innovative project in the hopes of assisting others. Their experience guides this report, which will not only serve as a roadmap for identifying gaps in addition treatment services in Staten Island, but will provide other communities with a method of evaluating the network of substance abuse treatment services.”

Dean Merit E. Janow of Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs said, “SIPA is glad to have had this opportunity to work with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office and Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York as well as the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness on this timely and important Capstone project. Our students benefited from their support and from the guidance of faculty advisors Dr. Silvia Martins and Dr. Lisette Nieves. We look forward to continued engagement to provide meaningful policy solutions to combat opioid addiction in New York City.”

The researchers conducted a case study based on interviews with 61 individuals affected by the opioid crisis, supplemented by a literature review and assessment of treatment capacity and distribution of services on the island. The interviewees included law enforcement officials, political officials, as well as people in recovery, academic researchers and service providers.

The report summarizes and analyzes their findings from these interviews and provides a map of current overdoses and existing services available on Staten Island. It also explains the causative and aggravating factors of the crisis such as stigma and information gaps, while analyzing the unique roles law enforcement, medical, government, and counseling officials can play in finding and implementing solutions.

The findings are broken down into different categories, including: causes of the opioid crisis; demography and geography of the epidemic on Staten Island; treatment gaps and opportunities; the role of law enforcement; continuum of care; knowledge and education gaps, and adequacy of current drug awareness programs.

The report also lists recommendations to address the issues raised in each category. These include: providing access to opioid addiction services where they are most needed; creating linkages in the system to ensure comprehensive, patient-centered care; developing a targeted campaign aimed at reducing stigma; establishing a searchable website with comprehensive information about available opioid addiction services (Note: RCDA has already implemented this recommendation with our SIHOPE.org campaign), and drawing on the unique lived experiences of people in recovery.

In 2016, Staten Island had the highest rate of overdoses in New York City with 116 deaths. So far in 2017, there have been approximately 68 fatal overdoses in the borough.

A copy of the report can be found here: <http://rcda.nyc.gov/press/2017/2017-35.pdf>