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**SHERIFF COPPINGER’S STATEMENT ON JUDGE CASPER’S RULING**

On November 26, 2018, Judge Denise J. Casper rendered her decision in the Geoffrey Pesce case which was recently heard in U. S. District Court in Boston. At present, my office is continuing to review this matter along with legal counsel. Since I have been asked for comment in this regard, I offer the following statement:

“Currently, there are no correctional facilities in Massachusetts providing methadone to male inmates. Due to the potential far-ranging effects of Judge Casper’s decision, both statewide and nationally, we are carefully reviewing it to determine our next steps.

Correction facilities across the country, along with mental health and substance abuse professionals, grapple with the best way to tackle this massive public health crisis of opioid addiction. One approach currently being used to treat opioid addicted individuals is prescribing them methadone or suboxone. In a prison setting, administering these drugs raises many security, logistical and fiscal concerns, that are not issues for individuals who are not incarcerated. Many individuals who arrive at our facility also test positive for other illicit drugs including fentanyl, amphetamines, benzodiazepines, cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamines, and heroin, amongst others. Clearly this is a complicated issue.

The Essex County Sheriff’s Department, along with fellow Sheriffs across the Commonwealth, are looking for the best approach to assist inmates fighting their addictions. We understand the seriousness of this issue and want to do it right. This past summer, the Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association joined with the State Legislature to craft a statewide pilot program to provide medication assisted treatment (MAT) at five county correctional facilities in the Commonwealth: Middlesex, Franklin, Norfolk, Hampden and Hampshire. The goal of this initiative, contained in the state’s latest opioid legislation, is to develop best practices for MAT treatment program in a prison setting and foster innovation in corrections in efforts to increase public safety, improve public health, and save lives.

As Sheriff, my responsibility is the care, custody and control of those individuals incarcerated here in Essex County. We will provide the necessary services, and specific treatment needs, in a safe and secure environment for all residing within our facilities. My goal is to help our inmates return to their communities better prepared to function as productive members of society.”

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