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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release on July 9, 2019

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Borough Leaders Note Significant Progress of Staten Island Approach to Opioid Epidemic

Data shows decrease in fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses on Staten Island; all declare continued efforts to eliminate substance use disorder

Staten Island, N.Y. – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon today joined Borough President James Oddo, Congressman Max Rose, Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, NYPD Staten Island Borough Commander Assistant Chief Kenneth Corey, Joseph Conte, Executive Director, Staten Island Performing Provider System, and members of the health and recovery community to announce a significant decrease in overall overdoses on Staten Island during the first-half of 2019.

According to preliminary RCDA/NYPD Overdose Response Initiative numbers, overdose totals on Staten Island decreased by 44% to 108 overdoses (both fatal and non-fatal) as of June 30, 2019 compared to 194 overdoses for the same time period in 2018. Fatal overdoses decreased by 35% to 37 deaths as of June 30, 2019 compared with 55 deaths for the same time period in 2018. Naloxone saves also decreased by 49% to 71 saves as of June 30, 2019 compared to 139 saves during the same time period in 2018. Between 2016 and 2019, RCDA has projected a 36% decrease in total overdose fatalities on Staten Island.

“While there is still much work to be done, the current overdose rates show we are making significant progress in our mission to save lives and end the opioid epidemic on Staten Island,” **said District Attorney Michael E. McMahon.** “We are greatly encouraged by these preliminary numbers, which represents the collective work of law enforcement, community and health providers, our local elected leaders, and every Staten Islander affected by this crisis.

Our tireless efforts have finally brought us to a turning point in this long battle, but the war is far from over. That is why we are ramping up our efforts to attack the problem on multiple fronts – providing more access to treatment through our expanded HOPE program for individuals whose criminal cases stem from their substance abuse issues, and more quickly connecting those at high-risk to resources through the Overdose Avoidance and Recovery (OAR) Court. At the same time, my office and the NYPD continue to utilize the

Overdose Response Initiative to track overdoses in real-time and build investigations against major drug dealers, which more effectively prevents them from peddling their poison in our communities and profiting off the addiction of others.”

McMahon concluded, “Our borough and our nation as a whole have recognized that a concentrated, multi-pronged approach is the only way to solve this problem, and we will continue working together with our many partners to make Staten Island the model for how large cities can address this crisis by both saving lives and reducing crime.”

Borough President James Oddo, said, “Our nation is in the throes of a horrible opioid epidemic, and we know too well Staten Island is no exception. While this decrease in overdoses shows promising progress, we are by no means taking a victory lap. There is still work to do in this fight. Our Borough Hall team continues to do all we can to push back against the opioid epidemic, through an aggressive, all-hands-on-deck approach because we know addiction does not discriminate.”

Congressman Max Rose, said, “Every life lost from a drug overdose is one too many—thankfully we’re seeing incredible progress on turning the tide of the opioid epidemic that has been wreaking havoc on our community for far too long. This progress isn’t by accident though, it’s due to a comprehensive effort by everyone to work together in a way that truly is saving lives. There’s still so much more work to do, but this shows what we’re doing is working.”

Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's Special Narcotics Prosecutor, said, “I join the people of Staten Island in thanking District Attorney McMahon for his leadership in developing a collaborative approach to the opioid crisis in the county that was ground zero for the epidemic in New York City. We all recognize that the success announced today is fragile, and there is much still to be done. However, when so many in this community have lost so much, it is important to pause and recognize progress. Staten Island has embraced an “all hands on” approach. The New York City Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, New York City Health Department, local government and community leaders, including treatment providers, have all helped rein in this epidemic and all deserve recognition.”

NYPD Commissioner James P. O’Neill, said, “The NYPD’s top priority is the preservation of human life and these preliminary figures show that by working with the community, health providers and our fellow law enforcement professions we are in fact saving lives. We have to do everything we can to prevent overdoses and fatalities, because it’s our shared responsibility to end this opioid epidemic and get people the help they need.”

Joseph Conte, Executive Director, Staten Island Performing Provider System, said, “The statistics don’t lie, the SI strategy to confront the opioid crisis is a resounding success. Our RCDA and law enforcement, doctors, clinicians and social networks have combined forces to execute on this approach that many others are now following. The “HOPE” model is superior in its innovative and cooperative approach, use of analytics and leveraging of the workforce. Congratulations to all, as we take this brief pause to celebrate the achievement. However, we must never forget the painful losses our community has suffered and vow to redouble our efforts to combat addiction and those who contribute to its spread.”

Diane Arneth, Executive Director, Community Health Action of Staten Island, a Member of Hudson River Health Care, said, “Community Health Action is proud and humbled to be a partner in Staten Island’s remarkable achievement in the reduction of opioid overdoses. Working side by side with law enforcement, health care systems and community providers, we have aligned our resources to not only reduce the death and harm caused by substance use, but to rebuild the lives of those shattered by it. This extraordinary accomplishment is the result of our shared commitment to adopt strategies that work, such as diversion for low level possession, use of peers and increased access to buprenorphine. The contribution of people with lived experience throughout our programs has informed both our understanding and our

solutions. While the full task is far from done, our collective vision and coordinated implementation is and will be the key to driving this dramatic improvement in the health and well-being of our borough."

**Overdoses data was obtained through the RCDA/NYPD Overdose Response Initiative and is subject to change.*

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