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**DA McMahon Marks First National
Fentanyl Awareness Day; Promises to Take Down Dealers and Help
Those Battling Addiction**

***D.A. McMahon joins Staten Island elected officials, premier behavioral health organizations, and community treatment partners to recognize the first "National Fentanyl Awareness Day."*

Staten Island, N.Y. – Today, Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon gathered with Staten Island elected officials, premier behavioral health organizations, and community treatment partners to recognize the first "National Fentanyl Awareness Day." A silent but pervasive killer, fentanyl has been linked to almost 80% of all fatal drug overdoses here on Staten Island since 2020. While RCDA continues to work tirelessly to beat back this epidemic, we are calling on all Staten Islanders to join us in this fight by spreading awareness to those in your life who may be at risk of overdose and their loved ones that treatment is available. Visit SIHOPE.org for more information and resources.

District Attorney Michael E. McMahon said, "Today is the First National Fentanyl Awareness Day across the country, and the importance of this topic on Staten Island cannot be overstated. The prevalence of fentanyl in New York City has turned dangerous drugs into extremely deadly drugs. Fentanyl and its analogues are to blame and it's showing up not just in heroin which we saw originally, but in cocaine, methamphetamine and, a really troubling trend recently, in pill form. Because of recent statistics, it is even more critical to help those struggling with addiction and substance abuse and address this public health crisis, while also holding dealers accountable. Thank you to our partners in the NYPD who help us hold these dealers accountable as well as our partners who provide treatment and recovery options, and work with us every day to serve Staten Islanders. I hope that today is the start of our recommitment to the urgency needed to help those struggling with addiction and substance abuse, because the next time someone battling substance use issues uses drugs, it very well might be the last time."

Council Member Kamillah Hanks said, "The opioid epidemic has run rampant and taken too many lives nationwide, and particularly on Staten Island, for far too long. Fentanyl is a deadly substance that is exacerbating this crisis and it is my hope that by partnering with the Richmond County District Attorney's office to raise awareness, we can work together toward bold, comprehensive interventions and the harm reduction solutions necessary to stop it from cutting more lives short."

Borough President Vito Fossella said, “Fentanyl is like a rogue assassin and affects the lives of so many Staten Islanders. Behind every one of those fatal drug overdose statistics, there is a broken family who has been impacted. It truly breaks your heart. With the launch of Staten Island’s First National Fentanyl Awareness Day, we are hopeful that this campaign will continue the awareness of the growing fentanyl public health crisis. I want to thank DA McMahon for consistently being on the frontlines of this challenge and working to keep Staten Island as the safest city in America.”

Joe Conte, Executive Director of the Staten Island Performing Provider System said, "The Staten Island Performing Provider System applauds the efforts of the Richmond County District Attorney in highlighting the danger to our community and the nation by declaring May, 10th National Fentanyl Awareness Day. Fentanyl is now the number one cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 45; CDC cites over 150 people die every day from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl; between 2020 and 2021, nearly 79,000 people between 18 and 45 years old died of fentanyl overdoses, according to the data analysis. In addition, the \$4 million Hotspotting Overdose Prevention Program funded by the Secure Futures Project and Northwell Health was implemented in January. Our partners at the DA’s office, SIUH, RUMC and CHASI are implementing this program and it is making a big impact in those for those at highest risk for overdose, using predictive analytics, integrated care coordination and outreach by CRPAs. This effort directly addresses the CDC recommendations from their Health Alert Network."

Diane Arneith, Executive Director of the Community Health Action of Staten Island said, "The Community Health Action of Staten Island stands with District Attorney Michael McMahon and all our colleagues to continue to sound the alarm and educate our community about the prevalence of fentanyl and strategies to address and eliminate its deadly consequences."

Luke Nasta, Chief Executive Officer of Camelot Staten Island said, "Over 105,000 people overdosed and died in a one-year period in the United States over 5,500 of them were in New York. Did you know one? One time use of fentanyl can prove fatal."

Jacqueline Filis, Executive Director of the YMCA said, "National Fentanyl Awareness Day is a day aimed not only at raising public awareness of an urgent crisis but also at activating ourselves and our communities to combat the alarming rates of overdose due to illegally made fentanyl. Fentanyl has taken the lives of far too many, far too soon. Countless families have been devastated, lives with infinite potential cut short and communities upended. One of the essential, life-saving tools that we have in our toolbox to combat this crisis is lifesaving medications which are available at the Y’s Counseling Services as well as other Staten Island organizations and pharmacies. Bringing awareness to the scourge of fentanyl is vital to turning the tide but at the same time it is critical to recognize the countless individuals and families who are in recovery. Recovery is possible. Recovery, in a person-centered manner, is just a phone call away. At the Y’s Counseling Service, services can be started by walking in during our open intake hours which are available 6 days a week between both locations of our agency. Substance misuse not only impacts the lives of those who are using but their loved ones as well. Support and treatment is available to both individuals and to families.”

Maggie Walsh, Program Director of Empower, Assist, & Care for Staten Island and Brooklyn said, "EAC stands with the continued efforts to combat the growing fentanyl epidemic and is committed to helping our community achieve a safer future."

Overdoses claimed the lives of 51 Staten Islanders in 2009. A dramatic leap to 132 fatalities in 2020 coincided with the increases in fentanyl-related overdoses in New York City. From 2000 to 2014 in New York City, about 2% to 3% of overdose deaths were fentanyl-related. The number of fatal overdoses linked to fentanyl rocketed to 44% in 2016, 57% in 2017, 70% in 2019, and 80% in 2020.

Despite these profound challenges, the last few years have brought some positive developments. The wide availability of the rescue drug naloxone and its overall effectiveness is part of why there are nearly twice as

many recoveries as fatal overdoses on Staten Island in 2020.

HOPE, our groundbreaking and nationally emulated program was mentioned in the White House National Drug Control Strategy last month as a successful example of a program designed to help those struggling with drug addiction. If the individual does engage, their drug possession arrest is not prosecuted as they are offered the opportunity to meaningfully engage in social and medical services (peer support, harm reduction, SUD treatment). Since program inception, approximately 94-percent of the individuals who complete an assessment to participate in the program meaningfully engage in services and have their cases withdrawn and these participants are considerably less likely to be rearrested.

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