Media Contact: Jeanne Milstein

jmilstein@ci.new-london.ct.us

860-965-5314

**CONNECTICUT MAYORS JOIN FORCES TO RECOVER DAMAGES FROM OPIOID CRISIS**

New Task Force Formed to Advocate for Legislation

New London, CT – March 6, 2019 – New London Mayor Michael Passero, former state senator and current Mayor of New Haven, Toni Harp, Wallingford Mayor William Dickinson Jr. and New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart have announced that they will collectively co-chair a new bipartisan coalition, the Connecticut Opioid Strategy Task Force (COST). The mission of the coalition is to advocate for the Opioid Accountability Act, legislation that will clarify Connecticut municipalities’ abilities to seek damages from the corporations that have caused and are fueling the current opioid epidemic. Other municipal stakeholders including The Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM), Connecticut Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association, Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH), prevention and treatment providers and child welfare advocates are joining the coalition to amplify the message to their legislators.

[All pending municipal suits](https://www.opioidscostct.com/list-of-municipalities) were dismissed or stayed in January, making Connecticut the only state in the nation where municipalities have been denied the ability to seek damages from the corporations that they believe are responsible for the crisis in their communities. In response to this ruling, legislation has been proposed that would clarify that the injuries borne by municipalities fighting the opioid crisis are cognizable and, if proven, recoverable in court. This legislation would not upend Connecticut law or overturn precedent, nor would it have any impact on the State of Connecticut’s case. That suit could take years to resolve and, in the meantime, this legislation would simply provide Connecticut municipalities the ability to seek injunctive relief and damages.

 “Every state and federal court in the US that is currently adjudicating opioid cases is allowing municipalities’ claims to go forward – except in Connecticut,” said Mayor Harp. “It is fundamentally unfair that Connecticut is the only state where taxpayers are forced to bear the costs of the opioid epidemic with no ability to seek recourse from the wrongdoers. And even if the state eventually reaches a settlement in its suit, there is no guarantee that the monies will find their way back to our communities. The only way to guarantee restitution on a local level is for our municipalities to sue on our own behalf.”

“Connecticut communities are being crushed by the direct cost of the crisis through the increased investment in services and resources required to deal with the epidemic,” continued Mayor Passero. “This means critical financial and personnel resources are being diverted from programs designed to meet the needs of the rest of our citizens and the entire community suffers.”

“With 50,000 people dying every year and 1,000 overdoses a day, there is no denying that this is national public health emergency,” said Mayor Stewart. “Connecticut municipalities are simply asking, as are the hundreds of other municipalities across the country that have filed suit, that the drug companies and pharmaceutical executives who made billions in profits, while leaving devastated communities in their wake, be held accountable. “

 “It is important to note that this is a bipartisan issue that cuts across political, geographic and social lines to impact every community in our state,” added Mayor Dickinson. “We encourage municipalities, fire and rescue organizations and concerned individuals to contact their representatives and encourage them to support the Opioid Accountability Act.”

To join COST or learn how to reach your state representatives, please visit <http://www.opioidscostct.com/>

**About the Connecticut Opioid Strategy Task Force**

*The Connecticut Opioid Strategy Task Force (COST) is a bipartisan coalition of municipal stakeholders advocating for legislation that will allow Connecticut municipalities to seek damages from corporations involved in the manufacture and distribution of the pharmaceuticals that are fueling the current opioid crisis in their communities. To learn more or to join the coalition please visit* <http://www.opioidscostct.com/>

###