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**House of Representatives Approves One Million Dollars to Bolster Opioid Epidemic Response in Boston**

October 17, 2019 – (BOSTON) – State Representative Jon Santiago (D-Boston) joined his colleagues in approving a \$723 million supplemental budget, including the allocation of funds to the City of Boston to bolster efforts near Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. The \$1,000,000 investment is designated to increase public health interventions and mitigate quality of life concerns in an area currently facing significant challenges related to substance use disorder and homelessness.

Addressing his colleagues in the House Chamber, Representative Santiago shared stories from his work as an emergency room physician and spoke to the importance of state resources. “We have a tremendous opportunity to address this hard hit area - a neighborhood that has become the epicenter of the opioid epidemic,” said Representative Santiago. “To put it quite plainly, this bill’s million dollar investment to increase comprehensive public health services will not only save lives, but will extend a life-line to an embattled community.”

“The evolving addiction and homelessness crisis faced in the South End and Newmarket neighborhoods cries out for the resources and solutions to deal with a real epidemic,” said Steve Fox, a resident of the South End and moderator of the South End Opioid Working Group. “Representative Santiago’s tireless efforts to educate and enlist the support of his fellow legislators to bring new and crucial resources to the epicenter of this epidemic cannot be understated. In Jon’s short tenure so far, he has proven to be the real deal, a neighborhood champion, someone who understands what we need, then goes and gets it.

“Leveraging state funding to put more boots on the ground, help homeless individuals, and expand innovative pilot programs is something the community has been calling for,” said Desmond Murphy, Vice-President of the Worcester Square Neighborhood Association. “It is an encouraging step in the right direction.”

Funds will be used to support increased mobile street teams to connect those impacted by substance use disorder and homelessness to community providers. Additional monies will fund the STEP program, a substance use recovery program that utilizes wrap around services including a seamless treatment path, job training, and intense case management. Finally, resources will be provided for the expansion of women’s drop-in centers to reduce sexual exploitation and implement low-threshold programming to meet the unique needs of women with substance use disorder.

The bill now heads to the Senate.