

## The METROWEST DAILY NEWS

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### AG Maura Healey lauds Keefe Tech health care students



**By Carolyn Sistrand Daily News Correspondent**

Jun 13, 2018 at 8:28 PM

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FRAMINGHAM - Students in Keefe Tech's health careers program received encouraging words Wednesday from state Attorney General Maura Healey and Framingham Mayor Yvonne Spicer, who applauded their career desires as the nation struggles with the opioid crisis.

"I'm really delighted that all of you are pursuing the careers that you are studying for right now," Healey told Keefe students. "There is nothing more profoundly powerful than the ability to look after and care for someone else."

Healey and Spicer fielded questions, gauging students' knowledge of opioids and emphasizing the critical role they will play as future health care professionals who are informed on the seriousness of the epidemic.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include illegal substances such as heroin and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, as well as pain relievers available legally by prescription, including OxyContin, morphine and others, according to the national Institute on Drug Abuse.

Since her election as attorney general in 2014, Healey has been a leader in combating the opioid crisis.

In 2015, she landed a first-in-the-nation bulk purchase agreement with Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, maker of Narcan, which can be applied nasally to reverse the effects of opioid overdose.

And just this week, Healey and her office filed a lawsuit against Connecticut-based Purdue Pharma, maker of OxyContin, and several of its executives, alleging they "engaged in a deadly, deceptive scheme to sell opioids in Massachusetts."

Healey is trying to hold companies accountable for distributing misleading information on the effects these drugs can have on users.

Last week, Spicer announced that Framingham had hired as special counsel Scott+Scott Attorneys at Law, LLP, of Connecticut to try to prove the drug industry knew of opioids' addictive nature. She said one death at the hands of opioids in Framingham and beyond is too many.

"In 2016, looking at 213 overdose episodes in Framingham, and also 18 fatalities, we felt that it was incumbent on us to do something proactive," said Spicer.

The city is seeking reparations from pharmaceutical companies in a lawsuit that lists similar claims to those of the state, saying the companies were reckless in not highlighting how dangerously addictive prescription opioids can be.

Framingham is among more than 30 cities and towns in the state that have filed similar lawsuits. Greenfield was the first to do so, in December.

"It really is a situation where there is enough evidence demonstrating that this company (Purdue Pharma) knew the addictive qualities in this medication and making sure that they're accountable," said Spicer. "It is really about accountability."

Spicer hopes that the students in Keefe's health careers program will be properly trained on how to use Narcan. She said she planned to become educated and qualified on how to administer the life-saving drug.

"The training that you are receiving here at Keefe is fantastic, and it is going to set you up for terrific careers," said Healey. "You actually are going to take care of people, and I don't think it gets any better than that."

State House News Service contributed to this story.

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