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Senate of Pennsylvania

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April 26, 2010

Harriet Dichter
Secretary
Department of Public Welfare
333 Health & Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Dichter:

I am writing as a follow-up to our discussion from your confirmation hearing last week before the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee where I was inquiring about DPW's methadone treatment policies, specifically the total cost per year to the Commonwealth for both methadone treatment and transportation.

It is my understanding that with methadone treatments, individuals receive 12 months of treatments as a minimum; and that some individuals continue to receive this type of treatment for years. What is the maximum number of treatments? I believe that the program should be focused on recovery and not an open ended policy of "maintenance". What is the department's position related to this?

I am calling on the Department of Public Welfare to commit to only funding those methadone clinics that have a formally approved recovery program with a limit on the time that the state will pay for treatments. The Commonwealth should only pay for recovery, not maintenance. With state funding at such a critical juncture, it is imperative that we utilize the taxpayers' money wisely; therefore, the Commonwealth should not be in the business of providing artificial narcotics to addicted individuals for an infinite amount of time.

At the hearing, you also stated that the department has a new policy they are going to begin to pilot regarding the costs of transporting the individuals receiving methadone treatments. Considering that the government pays for transporting these individuals, could you please provide me a copy of this new program and also confirm where there are any requirements that the individual receive their treatment in the facility closest to their residence?

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in regard to this request and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Ward".

Senator Kim Ward