

# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054**

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**Vice Chair**  
Bills in the Third Reading

**Committees:**  
Ways and Means  
Judiciary  
Economic Development and  
Emerging Technologies

September 20, 2018

During my time as State Representative, I have had the opportunity to learn about, advocate for, earmark funds for and better understand the complexities of substance use disorder and addiction. I have also spent many hours participating locally with the treatment and agency providers that work to combat this disease. I would go as far as saying no other local elected official has been as immersed and involved in this issue in the past 4 1/2 years as I have.

As such, I come to the table with a deep understanding as to how this issue is impacting society, families and our community. This is a complex problem that deserves the multi-faceted approaches and focus that we are now engaged in. We no longer have our heads in the sand on this major problem and our initiatives are **slowly** turning the tide as overdose deaths are down due in part to greater issue visibility, engaged community support groups and legislation enacted that tracks and limits the distribution of medically prescribed opioids as well as the widespread availability of Narcan.

My opposition to the construction of another methadone clinic and treatment facility, is not based upon the good work done by many in this community, including SSTAR, but rather my opposition is based upon the additional strain that this facility will place on our community and its impact on the City of Fall River.

I question the level of transparency displayed by SSTAR in the siting of this facility. As noted in a December 2016 Herald News Editorial "Let SSTAR facility plans materialize" they noted: "SSTAR should be as transparent as possible about all aspects of this project, especially when it comes to location and the kinds of services offered. Once a location is chosen, SSTAR should meet with neighbors, business owners and landlords in the area to explain the project and address any concerns."

SSTAR, to the best of my knowledge, has not convened any neighborhood meetings nor have they had any public meetings or explained the overall social and economic impact that this facility will have on the community and many questions remain unanswered. What effort, if any, was made to site this facility elsewhere? If we are to believe SSTAR's contention that this facility is zoning exempt, what efforts did they take to place this facility in a surrounding community?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reports that approximately 2000 people receive daily methadone outpatient doses in Fall River. The addition of another methadone outpatient facility would place us second to Boston with the number of facilities. Remember, those seeking methadone must live in or near the community where they receive methadone as it is given mostly daily and there are only 35 communities in the Commonwealth that have these facilities. We say this crisis knows no geographic and socio-economic boundaries yet we corral these patients in only a small percentage of communities. If Boston, with a population of 685,094 people has five methadone clinics (one clinic for every 137,018 people), why does Fall River need a third methadone clinic for a population of 89,420 people (one clinic for every 29,806 people)?

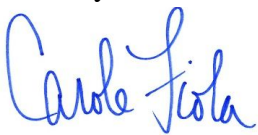
What is the relapse rate of inpatient clients? What happens to clients that are discharged or sign themselves out? Does SSTAR have programs to place these individuals in the community or back to the communities from which they came?

In my opinion, this is not a Not In My Back Yard issue, rather it is an issue that warranted transparency, clarity and further discussion. We needed to understand what other locations were looked at outside of the City. We needed to hear from public safety officials, educators, medical professionals, business leaders, recovery community and residents as to what impact positive or negative the facility will have on the city and we have not.

As the Fall River Zoning Board of Appeals is considering a request by SSTAR to overturn the Building Inspector's determination that the project is a non-conforming use within a commercial mill district, I respectfully request that the ZBA uphold the Building Inspector's determination. If SSTAR is unhappy with this decision, let them at their own expense appeal the decision in the courts. The citizens of Fall River should not be burdened with the costs of funding an appeal.

As the City continues to grow our economy with jobs, improve our quality of life, continue to enhance our waterfront and look forward to the reality of commuter rail access to and from Boston, this project does not represent the best that Fall River has to offer.

Sincerely,



Carole Fiola  
State Representative  
Sixth Bristol District