



## DRUG POLICY ROADMAP FOR GOVERNOR HOCHUL FIRST 45 DAYS IN OFFICE

Newly-inaugurated Governor Hochul has an urgent responsibility to course-correct a decade of harm from Cuomo's inaction on New York's overdose crisis. With a New Yorker dying every hour and 48 minutes to a preventable overdose -- claiming more lives than suicides, homicides, and car accidents combined in the state -- waiting a moment longer to take action will have fatal consequences.

**Following Governor Hochul centering of the overdose crisis in her inaugural address, VOCAL-NY is urging she act on the following five policies within her transitional 45 days in office:**

- 1. Sign the [Overdose Prevention Package](#) passed by the state lawmakers in 2021.**  
The legislature closed the session by passing three long overdue, life-saving overdose prevention bills: Medication-Assisted Treatment in Prisons and Jails, Syringe Decriminalization and Expansion, and Removing Prior Authorization for Medication-Assisted Treatment for people enrolled in Medicaid.
- 2. Authorization of the five Overdose Prevention Center pilots stalled by Cuomo.**  
Overdose Prevention Centers offer sterile supplies and controlled settings for people to use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who can intervene in case of an overdose or other medical event, and link people to counseling, and referrals to health and social services, including drug treatment. Since 2018, Cuomo [promised the authorization to pilot](#) five Overdose Prevention Centers - four in New York City and one in Ithaca - only to stall the programs while overdoses continued to skyrocket.
- 3. Appoint a new Commissioner of the Department of Health that will focus on racial justice and harm reduction.** New York needs a commissioner with a wealth of knowledge on the intersection of structural racism, the drug war, and failed policies that led us to this moment. We need a commissioner who knows how evidence-based programs, harm reduction, housing, and decarceration can prevent overdoses from happening in the first place.
- 4. Declare a Public Health Emergency to Release Funding to the [AIDS Institute](#) to and scale-up build a robust harm reduction infrastructure.** Harm reduction services -- syringe service programs, peer delivered services, and low-threshold access to medication-assisted treatment-- are a critical pathway toward health and recovery for people who use drugs. These programs have historically been incredibly underfunded— despite their proven efficacy— and are struggling to serve the increased need during the colliding COVID-19 and surging overdose crisis.



5. **Reject policies that are rooted in [fear mongering](#), criminalization, and lack scientific support.** Substantial evidence demonstrates criminal penalties do not have any effect on reducing either the supply of drugs or the demand for them. Instead, criminalization undermines avenues to reduce harms associated with drug use. These policies will inevitably increase incarceration - specifically for Black and Brown communities - and increase overdose deaths across New York. To rapidly turn the tide on the overdose crisis, New York State must remove drug use from the criminal-legal system entirely, and shift to ensuring universal access to equitable evidence-based solutions rooted in compassion, and racial and economic justice.