

Monday, April 4, 2022

Honorable Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Honorable Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
NYS Capitol Building Albany, NY 12224

Re: Safer Consumption Services Act ([S603/A224](#)), Senator Rivera & Assembly Member L. Rosenthal

Dear Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie,

We write to you as organizations, family members impacted by the overdose crisis, service providers working on the front lines, and people directly impacted by New York State's heart wrenching overdose crisis. With an astronomical surge in preventable overdoses and a deadly drug supply, we urge you to pass the life-saving Safer Consumption Services Act (S603/A224) to authorize the implementation of Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in high-need areas across New York State.

We have reached a critical crossroad in New York State's overdose crisis. In 2020, overdoses surged, creating the highest recorded number of fatalities in New York State history. Nearly 5,700 New Yorkers died from a preventable overdose from September 2020 to September 2021. Overdose continues to take more New Yorkers' lives than car accidents, suicides, and homicides combined. Black and brown New Yorkers' rates of overdose continue to surge, while white New Yorkers' rates are stabilizing or decreasing. All data sets and recent trends suggest that fatal overdoses will continue to break records year after year unless our government takes significant action to implement evidence-based solutions.

With a community member dying every hour and thirty minutes to a preventable overdose across the state, OPCs are one of many tools in the toolbox that must be utilized to save lives now. The success of New York City's recently opened centers are evidence that we need these services immediately across the state.

Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) offer sterile supplies and controlled settings for people to use pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who intervene in the event of an overdose or other medical emergencies, link people to counseling, and referrals to health and social services, including drug treatment. Approximately 100 OPCs have been operating in 66 cities around the world for over 35 years, and there has never been a fatal overdose at any one of these centers.

On November 30, 2021, the first two OPCs in the nation opened in New York City as a response to the highest number of preventable overdose deaths recorded in a single year since 2000. The two OPCs, co-located within previously established Syringe Service Programs, are operated by the non-profit OnPoint in Washington Heights and East Harlem – two areas of the

city with some of the highest concentrations of overdose. In three months of operating, OnPoint reversed over 185 overdoses, exceeding the city Health Department's predicted yearly estimate of 130 lives saved.

Numerous peer-reviewed scientific studies have proven the positive impacts of OPCs. These life-saving centers increase access to drug treatment; reduce HIV and hepatitis C; reduce the prevalence and harms of bacterial infections; create cost savings resulting from reduced disease, overdoses, and need for emergency medical services; and increased preventative health care and drug treatment utilizations. Research also highlights OPCs direct connection to improving the public safety of surrounding neighborhoods — as they do not increase community drug use, initiation into injection drug use, drug-related crime or public disorder. OPCs do, however, significantly decrease public injection and syringe litter.

Overdose Prevention Centers build on New York State's long history of implementing innovative community-based harm reduction strategies to address the overdose crisis. Passing the Safer Consumption Services Act will save countless lives, and at this watershed moment in the overdose crisis, *stalling on this lifesaving piece of legislation will have fatal consequences.*

For these reasons, we — the 230 undersigned fighting to save our communities and loved ones — urge the New York State legislature to urgently pass S603/A224 and authorize the Department of Health to work with local health departments to implement Overdose Prevention Centers in high need areas across New York State.

Respectfully,

ORGANIZATIONS:

African Services Committee	Black Health (National Black Leadership Commission on Health)	Central New York HIV Care Network
Action for a Better Community (ABC), Rochester	Boom! Health	Central Region Addiction Resource Center
ACT UP NY	Bronx Móvil	Citizen Action of New York
AIDS Advisory Council	Bronx Works	Coalition for Homeless Youth
Albany Damien Center	Brooklyn Community Pride Center	Coalition for the Homeless
Albany Medical Center	Brooklyn Defender Services	Coalition of Medication Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates (COMPA)
Alliance for Positive Change	Callen-Lorde Community Health Center	Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, Office of Community and Minority Affairs (OCMA)
Alliance for Positive Health	Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services	Community Action for Social Justice
Amida Care	Center for Community Alternatives	
AREA	Center for Popular Democracy	
Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center		

CUNY Institute for
Implementation Science in
Population Health (ISPH)
Destination Tomorrow
Diaspora Community
Health Center
Drug Policy Alliance
Ellis Medicine
Elmcor
Evergreen Health
Exponents
Family Services Network
of New York
Free the People WNY
From Punishment to Public
Health (P2PH) at John Jay
College
Gay Men's Health Crisis
(GMHC)
GLSEN Lower Hudson
Valley
God's Love We Deliver
Grand Street Settlement
Haitian-American
Community Coalition, Inc.
(HCC)
Harlem United
Healing Communities
Study, Columbia County
Hepatitis C Mentor and
Support Group
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic Health Network
Homeless Services United
Housing Works, Inc.
iHealth
In Our Own Voices, Inc
Iris House
Justice for the abused
Katal Center for Equity,
Health, and Justice
Latino Commission on
AIDS (LCOA)

Latino Youth Development
& Resource center
Legal Action Center
Lenox Hill Retroviral
Disease Center, NYC
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender
Community Center (The
Center)
Long Island Progressive
Coalition
Make the Road NY
ME Action
National Action Network
National Black Leadership
Commission on AIDS
(NBLCA)
National Harm Reduction
Coalition
National Working Positive
Coalition
Neighbors Together
New York Association of
Alcoholism and Substance
Abuse Providers (ASAP)
New York Civil Liberties
Union
NEXT Distro
NO OD NY
NYC-DSA Racial Justice
Working Group
NYS Academy of Family
Physicians
One Medical
OnPoint
PAIN
Partnership for the Public
Good
Planned Parenthood of
Greater NY
Policing and Social Justice
Project
Positive Health Project
REACH Medical

Recovery All Ways
Ryan/Chelsea-Clinton
Community Health Center
SIR Addiction Services
Consulting
Southern Tier AIDS
Program
St. Ann's Corner of Harm
Reduction
Stop Stigma Now
Sun River Health
Supportive Housing
Network of New York
(SHNNY)
The New York Academy of
Medicine
Together Our Unity Can
Heal, Inc. (TOUCH)
Translatina Network
Treatment Action Group
Trillium Health
Trillium Health
Truth Pharm
VNSNY CHOICE
SelectHealth
VOCAL - NY
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Women & Justice Project

SERVICE PROVIDERS:

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Brooke Brailey
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Jacob Clary
Jennifer Werner
Jeremy Klemanski
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FAITH LEADERS:

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**FAMILY MEMBERS
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**PEOPLE DIRECTLY
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