

May 11, 2023

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

**Re: Safer Consumption Services Act ([S399/A338](#)), Senator Rivera/Assembly Member L. Rosenthal**

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

We write to you as 73 organizations working on the front lines of New York State's heart-wrenching overdose crisis.

We applaud you both for displaying leadership on this issue, through proposing \$40 million of opioid settlement funds towards Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in the Senate one-house budget, and the movement of the bill to authorize OPCs out of the Assembly health committee. But, as the crisis continues to wage an unrelenting fight, and an evermore toxic drug supply prevails, we urge you to pass the life-saving Safer Consumption Services Act ([S399/A338](#)) to authorize the expansion and funding implementation of Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in high-need areas across New York State.

The overdose crisis in New York State has been breaking records for the last two years; more than 6,000 have died due to a preventable overdose in 2021 alone. Our state has passed the point of return. Without significant implementation of evidence-based solutions from our government, it is inevitable that we will continue to lose thousands of New Yorkers from preventable overdoses every year moving forward. As the rates of overdose continue to surge in Black and Brown communities especially, it is clear that there is a lack of investment and resources in New York's most marginalized communities. To not listen to the needs of New Yorkers is both a moral and political failing. There is no time left, and we need you -the legislative leaders of our state- to recognize the humanity in every New Yorker and morally wield their leadership in order to address this crisis.

Overdose Prevention Centers offer sterile supplies and controlled settings for participants to use their pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained professionals who intervene in the event of an overdose or other medical emergencies. OPCs also link people to counseling, and refer them to health and social services, including drug treatment. On November 30, 2021, OnPoint made history by adding OPCs to enhance the services in their already operating Syringe Service Programs in Washington Heights and East Harlem - making them the first sanctioned program in the nation.

By adding the additional service of an Overdose Prevention Center to OnPoint's existing programs, in two areas of the city with some of the highest concentrations of overdose, as of January 31 2023, the program has: intervened in over 700 overdose interventions, served over 2,500 participants with 55,000 unique visits, diverted almost 1.5 million units of hazardous waste (syringes and supplies) from public parks and public spaces, has only called Emergency Medical Services twelve times, and **there has been zero fatal overdoses.**

OPCs have been operating for 37 years, in approximately 67 cities around the world, and the life-saving work and success of OnPoint's program mirrors the peer-reviewed literature of OPCs internationally. These centers increase access to drug treatment; create cost savings resulting from reduced disease, overdoses, and need for emergency medical services; and reduce HIV and hepatitis C and the prevalence and harms of bacterial infections. 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.

OnPoint's work has also inspired momentum to employ this critical tool to address the overdose crisis in other states like Colorado and New Mexico, and cities like San Francisco. New York City Mayor Adams and Speaker Adams have called to ensure New York City expands and funds five OPCs by 2025. The experts appointed to the New York State Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board have called to fund and expand OPCs statewide. And, a recent poll showed 64% of New Yorkers from across the state and political affiliation support these life-saving centers.

The overdose crisis is a kitchen-table issue that affects every corner of our state, and OnPoint has made New York a beacon for harm reduction across the country.

As Governor Hochul continues to stall in addressing this ever-worsening crisis, especially as New Yorkers across the political aisle continue to support these centers, you both must continue to lead the nation in using evidence-based tools that center public health, not criminalization. **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.**

We, the 73 undersigned organizations, urge the Senate and Assembly to pass SCSA (S399/A338) to authorize the Department of Health to authorize and regulate Overdose Prevention Centers in high need areas across New York State.

Respectfully,

ACR Health  
ACT UP NY  
Action for a Better Community (ABC),  
Rochester

African Services Committee  
Albany Damien Center  
Alliance for Positive Change  
Alliance for Positive Health

Amida Care  
AREA  
Black Health (National Black Leadership  
Commission on Health)  
BOOM!Health  
Bronx Móvil  
Bronx Works  
Brooklyn Community Pride Center  
Buffalo Resilience  
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center  
Central New York HIV Care Network  
Central Region Addiction Resource Center  
Coalition for Homeless Youth  
Community Health Action of Staten Island  
Community Health Action of Staten Island  
Community Outreach through Radical  
Empowerment (CORE)  
Destination Tomorrow  
Drug Policy Alliance  
Education Alliance  
Ellis Medicine  
Elmcor  
Evergreen Health Services  
Exponents  
Faith in Harm Reduction  
Family Services Network of New York  
Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)  
Grand Street Settlement  
Haitian-American Community Coalition, Inc.  
(HCC)  
Harlem United  
Harm Reduction Coalition  
Harm Reduction Works  
Housing Works, Inc.  
Positive Health Project  
iHealth

In Our Own Voices, Inc.  
Iris House  
Jews For Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ)  
Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice  
Latino Commission on AIDS (LCOA)  
Legal Action Center  
Lenox Hill Retroviral Disease Center, NYC  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender  
Community Center (The Center)  
Make the Road NY  
ME Action  
National Black Leadership Commission on  
AIDS (NBLCA)  
National Harm Reduction Coalition  
National Working Positive Coalition  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York Doctors Coalition  
NYS Academy of Family Physicians  
OnPoint NYC  
Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS  
Ryan Chelsea-Clinton Community Health  
Center  
Safe Horizon  
SOAR Case Management  
Southern Tier AIDS Program  
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction  
Stop Stigma Now  
Swallowtail Healing Collective  
Together Our Unity Can Heal, Inc. (TOUCH)  
Translatina Network  
Treatment Action Group (TAG)  
Trillium Health  
Truth Pharm  
VOCAL-NY  
Youth Represent

