

January 8, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

The 112 undersigned organizations write to express our strong disappointment with your letter to the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board rejecting their recommendation to use funds to support an Overdose Prevention Center (OPC) demonstration project.

We were encouraged by your early attention to the overdose crisis. And yet, since you assumed office, over 13,000 New Yorkers have died from a preventable overdose, with deaths continuing to trend upward, setting new and more devastating records each year.<sup>1</sup> We are in an unprecedented public health crisis that is compounded by a lack of accessible housing, barriers to healthcare, and structural racism. Black New Yorkers have the highest rate of overdose death and the largest increase from 2021 to 2022, with Latino/e New Yorkers having the second highest overdose death increase.<sup>2</sup>

These numbers are unacceptable and would be higher without the lifesaving and life affirming work of New York's two OPCs, operated by OnPoint NYC. In two years, these sites have intervened in potentially fatal overdoses more than 1,200 times<sup>3</sup> and have been instrumental in connecting people to housing, detox, counseling, and other holistic services. In addition, the OPCs have diverted more than two million units of syringe litter and other hazardous waste away from streets, parks and buildings.

The Advisory Board included their recommendation to fund OPC demonstration projects again in 2023 understanding that OPCs are currently one of the critical ventures actively working to prevent the deaths of Black and brown New Yorkers. Right now, the only OPCs in the country are in New York City, and so the Advisory Board made their recommendation recognizing that communities outside of New York City deserve the opportunity to benefit from the range of services provided by OPCs. The recommendation was intentionally designed to allow the state of New York to conduct an academic study of OPCs, something the federal government itself is already doing.

By omitting the legal analysis used to make the decision to reject the Advisory Board's proposal, the Executive does not take seriously the enormity of the overdose crisis and the need to address it with bold strategies. It also ignores that New York's OPCs have operated for two years without federal interference and Rhode Island has authorized state funding to open an OPC. We are living through an immense public health crisis and New Yorkers deserve an explanation when a program that is proven to be life-saving and life-affirming is rejected.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Disease Control, Drug Overdose Mortality by State, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug\\_poisoning\\_mortality/drug\\_poisoning.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug_poisoning_mortality/drug_poisoning.htm)

<sup>2</sup> NYC Department of Health, *Epi Data Brief: Unintentional Drug Poisoning (Overdose) Deaths in New York City in 2022*, Sept. 2023, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief137.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> OnPoint NYC, <https://onpointnyc.org/>

Strategies to address the overdose epidemic must be robust, anti-racist, and responsive to New Yorkers who are chronically underserved and increasingly at-risk of adverse life and health outcomes as they age. Safe and supportive spaces to prevent overdose death must be available and promoted throughout the entire state as diligently as other crucial public health programs such as cooling centers on hot days or vaccines.

As people continue to lose their lives and families continue to bury their loved ones at astounding rates, there is a real opportunity for the state to be a national leader in implementing a bold vision for addressing this epidemic. The Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board has attempted to do just that with their 2023 report. It is time for you, Governor Hochul, to do the same.

Signed,

AAS Empowerment LLC  
Access/Research Coalition  
ACR Health  
Action for a Better Community, Rochester  
Addiction Center of Broome County  
African Services Committee  
AIDS Advisory Council  
AIDS Center of Queens County  
Albany Damien Center  
Alliance for Positive Change  
Alliance for Positive Health  
Amida Care  
AREA  
Argus Community  
Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center  
Black Health (National Black Leadership Commission on Health)  
BOOM! Health  
Bridging Access to Care, Inc.  
Bronx Móvil  
Bronx Works  
Brooklyn Community Pride Center  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
Brooklyn Movement Center  
Buffalo Resilience  
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center  
Camelot of Staten Island Inc.  
CASES  
Center for Community Alternatives  
Central New York HIV Care Network  
Central Region Addiction Resource Center  
Circle for Support

Citizen Action of New York  
Coalition of Homeless Youth  
Coalition of Medication Assisted Treatment Providers and Advocates (COMPA)  
Committee of Interns and Residents SEIU  
Community Access  
Community Action for Social Justice  
Community Health Action of Staten Island  
Community Service Society  
Destination Tomorrow  
Diaspora Community Health Center  
Drug Policy Alliance  
Ellis Medicine  
Elmcor  
Empowerment: Before, During and After  
End the New Jim Crow Action Network (ENJAN)  
EngageWell IPA, LLC  
Equitable Future, Inc.  
Evergreen Health  
Exponents  
Faith in Harm Reduction  
Family Services Network of New York  
Friends of Recovery NY  
From Punishment to Public Health at John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
Gay Men's Health Crisis  
God's Love We Deliver  
Grand Street Settlement  
Haitian American Community Coalition, Inc.  
Harlem United  
Harm Reduction Coalition  
Hispanic Federation  
Hispanic Health Network  
Hospitality House TC, Inc.  
Housing Works  
iHealth  
In Our Own Voices, Inc.  
InUnity Alliance  
Invest In Our New York  
Iris House  
Justice Committee  
Latino Commission on AIDS (LCOA)  
Legal Action Center  
Legal Aid Society  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center)  
Long Island Social Justice Action Network (LISJAN)

ME Action  
Michael Galipeau Consulting  
National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, Inc. (NAMI-NYC)  
National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA)  
National Survivors Union  
National Working Positive Coalition  
New Hour  
NEW Pride Agenda  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York Doctors Coalition  
New York Recovery Alliance  
New York Harm Reduction Association  
New York State Council for Community Behavioral Health  
NEXT Distro  
NYC Justice Peer Initiative  
OnPoint NYC  
P.A.I.N  
Peer Network of New York  
Project Safe Point- Catholic Charities Care Coordination Services  
Recovery All Way (RAW)  
REACH Medical  
Rochester Area Task Force on AIDS  
Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center  
Southern Tier AIDS Program  
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction  
Strong Economy For All Coalition  
The Bronx Defenders  
The Fortune Society  
The Osborne Society  
Translatina Network  
Treatment Action Group (TAG)  
Tress Advisors  
Trillium Health  
Truth Pharm  
VOCAL - NY  
Warren Washington County Homeless Youth Coalition  
Youth Represent