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Joint Statement: Elected Officials & Statewide Coalition Launch Legislative Effort to Create “Overdose Prevention Programs” in the Golden State

Campaign Launches Amid Skyrocketing Overdose Deaths and Growing Support Across the Country for this Evidence-Based, Cost-Effective Approach

December 8, 2020 – Los Angeles, CA – California legislators joined California State Senator Scott Wiener (San Francisco) today on the first day of the Legislative session to introduce [SB 57](#), a bill to bring overdose prevention programs to California. The Drug Policy Alliance—along with other co-sponsoring organizations, including the [California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives](#), [California Society of Addiction Medicine](#), [HealthRIGHT 360](#), [National Harm Reduction Coalition](#), [Tarzana Treatment Centers](#), [San Francisco AIDS Foundation](#) and a growing statewide coalition—are launching a vigorous legislative campaign to pilot Overdose Prevention Programs (OPP), in San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles County, where the homeless crisis continues to grow, overdose rates have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and fentanyl-related deaths are surging.

"The Drug Policy Alliance is pleased to co-sponsor this measure – as it is critically important now more than ever," **said Jeannette Zanipatin, California State Director for the Drug Policy Alliance.** "With COVID-19 exacerbating what was already a devastating overdose crisis in California and across the nation, overdose prevention programs provide an evidence-based, cost-effective approach for us to save lives now, prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and connect people with other vitally important services - such as treatment, housing and other healthcare resources – which have been shown to improve health outcomes in the long-term."

The co-sponsors represent public health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment professionals, addiction medicine doctors, people who use drugs, harm reduction and drug policy reform advocates, and HIV and hepatitis C service providers. SB 57 will focus on the urgent need for these life-saving programs in the wake of the nation’s growing overdose crisis, which kills more people than traffic accidents, homicides and suicides combined. In addition, the coalition will point to how other countries, states and cities across the nation have taken steps to implement these facilities, based on well-established research and practice.

“Authorizing overdose prevention programs is more urgent than ever. Hundreds more people have died of drug overdoses in San Francisco this year while we wait for this legislation to pass and get signed into law – four times as many San Franciscans have died of overdose as have died of COVID-19 this year. San Francisco wants and needs these services and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation is eager to implement them as soon as possible.” - **Laura Thomas, Director of Harm Reduction Policy, San Francisco AIDS Foundation**

"This is the time to pass this bill and open Overdose Prevention Programs all over California. COVID, the rapid growth of homelessness, the increase of OD-related deaths and vulnerabilities to HIV and HCV outbreaks in every jurisdiction, including in those most resourced such as San Francisco, requires that we scale up our investment in the health of people who use drugs, and in particular that we protect unhoused, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx folks, along with other vulnerable communities most impacted. Overdose Prevention Programs must become a critical component of our health care system in California in 2021." - **Laura Guzman, National Harm Reduction Coalition**

The California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) is proud to be a co-sponsor of Senator Wiener's SB 57, his landmark Overdose Prevention Program (OPP) legislation. OPPs provide a spectrum of care for people who use drugs that are often missed in traditional treatment settings. OPPs are an effective gateway to treatment. OPPs offer California the opportunity to reduce fatal overdose deaths and to engage more people in treatment. CSAM believes OPP are essential to provide substance use disorder treatment for ALL participants regardless of gender identity, ability to pay, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic circumstance. Addiction does not discriminate. Access to treatment should not discriminate either. - **David Kan, MD, DFASAM**

CAADPE is proud to join, as a co-sponsor, with Senator Wiener in his effort to address California's overdose crisis. The Overdose Prevention Programs (OPP) are proven to make our communities safer and healthier. In this time of the need for public health safeguards, California should be using all known and effective strategies to curb the state's overdose crisis. Overdose Prevention Programs have been shown to reduce health and safety problems associated with drug use, including public drug use, discarded syringes, HIV and hepatitis infections, and overdose deaths. CAADPE applauds Sen. Wiener for his leadership in bringing this important treatment alternative to California. - **Al Senella, President CAADPE- CA Assn. of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, Inc.**

"With overdose death rates far outpacing COVID death rates in San Francisco, the need for safe drug consumption services cannot be more evident. It is our collective responsibility to respond affirmatively to public health officials requesting to open these evidence-based, life-saving, cost-effective services." - **Vitka Eisen, MSW, Ed.D, former injection heroin user and President & Chief Executive Officer of HealthRIGHT 360**

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About Drug Policy Alliance

The Drug Policy Alliance envisions a just society in which the use and regulation of drugs are grounded in science, compassion, health and human rights, in which people are no longer punished for what they put into their own bodies, and in which the fears, prejudices and punitive prohibitions of today are no more. Our mission is to advance those policies and attitudes that best reduce the harms of both drug use and drug prohibition, and to promote the autonomy of individuals over their minds and bodies. Learn more at drugpolicy.org