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## **CAADPE CALLS ON ALL CALIFORNIA GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES TO ADDRESS THE SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS IMPACTING MILLIONS OF CALIFORNIANS**

### **Following USC Debate Cancellation, CAADPE Urges Candidates to Engage on Issues That Directly Affect Californians**

**SACRAMENTO, CA** – The California Association for Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE) today called on all candidates running for Governor of California to commit to addressing the substance use disorder (SUD) crisis, one of the most urgent and far-reaching public health challenges facing the state.

The call comes in the wake of this week's cancellation of the USC/KABC gubernatorial debate, which was scrapped after its selection criteria excluded every prominent candidate of color from participation. The controversy has laid bare a troubling reality: too many Californians, particularly Californians of color, are being left out of the conversation, both on the debate stage and in the policy decisions that shape their lives.

"The debate cancellation is a symptom of a larger problem: candidates and institutions are still failing to address the real issues impacting Californians throughout the state," said Robb Layne, Executive Director, CAADPE. "Substance use disorder touches virtually every Californian, directly or indirectly. No other policy issue can claim that. We are calling on every candidate for governor to become a voice for change."

The stakes could not be higher. Californians of color continue to experience disproportionately high rates of substance use disorder and bear the heaviest burden of its consequences, including higher rates of incarceration and persistent barriers to accessing care. Nationally, data now shows that Black and Hispanic youth have surpassed white youth in rates of alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis use, a trend that demands urgent and equitable policy responses.

CAADPE believes that no other singular policy issue, impacts as many Californians as SUD, whether through personal experience, family, community, or the cascading effects on housing, public health, education, public safety, economic security, and the workforce.

CAADPE commends Sheriff Chad Bianco for being the first gubernatorial candidate to engage directly on these issues.

"We are not asking candidates to take a side. We are asking them to show up," continued Robb Layne, "Californians deserve a governor who understands the full scope of this crisis and has a real plan to address it. CAADPE is ready to be that trusted, nonpartisan resource."

CAADPE invites all candidates to contact Max Geide at [max@caadpe.org](mailto:max@caadpe.org) to schedule a meeting.