

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Biden Administration Support for Two Crises

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 841,000 people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose. Over 70% of drug overdose deaths in 2019 involved an opioid. Overdose deaths involving opioids, including prescription opioids, heroin, and synthetic opioids (like fentanyl), have increased over six times since 1999. Additionally, overdoses involving opioids killed nearly 50,000 people in 2019, and nearly 73% of those deaths involved synthetic opioids.

For people struggling with opioid use disorder, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed challenges at every turn. The COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. isn't just about COVID-19, it's about managing all of the spillover effects, including the effects it has had on people with addiction and substance use disorder. Job loss and social and family interactions have been limited. And the pandemic itself is depressing and anxiety provoking. These are all stimuli that can stress the psyche and the finances of someone who has an addiction. In some cases, it could push a person who was getting their addiction under control back toward substance use. In other cases, the pandemic might be the trigger that actually makes someone consider initiating drug use, which could end up becoming an addiction and being harmful.

Another point to consider is that the pandemic took away the attention—from the media, from legislators, from public health agencies—that was being focused on the opioid crisis. According to The Washington Post, there was addiction crisis in the U.S. that was being discussed quite a bit in 2019 and inroads were being made toward policy solutions. Many healthcare professionals and researchers feel the pandemic has overshadowed the opioid epidemic, but not entirely.

Eradicating the "X waiver," which is a requirement that physicians have a special waiver from the FDA in order to legally prescribe buprenorphine, a medication used to treat opioid use disorder. It's an anachronistic and backward policy that has caused a lot of harm and is no

longer relevant in 2020. That policy has actually been temporarily waived under an emergency declaration from the Department of Health and Human Services as of last month, which is a very big change.

Financial resources from legal settlements against opioid manufacturers and from stimulus spending and invest in our mental health infrastructure has been repeatedly proposed emphasizing the need to provide resources for primary care clinics to enhance their behavioral health support and to enhance local counseling services and help health care organizations provide easy access to mental health care.

Fortunately, President's Budget Request for the fiscal year 2022 dramatically increases funding for public health and safety in response to the ongoing drug overdose epidemic, specifically earmarking an unprecedented \$41 billion to address the addiction crisis our nation is facing. This funding level represents an increase of \$669 million over the FY2021 enacted level. This significant investment in public health and safety signals that the Biden-Harris administration is taking this crisis seriously and is determined to take action to bring much-needed aid and resources to those on the front lines of this effort, such as those in the substance abuse, prevention, and recovery fields.

The Request makes significant investments in ongoing efforts to stem the overdose epidemic, as well as increased spending targeted at reducing the supply of illicit substances in the country by increasing efforts to interdict illicit drugs and disrupting International drug trafficking operations. The Budget Request also includes a 5% increase in funding to the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The increase in funding for ONDCP further shows the seriousness to which the Administration views the issue of drug use. As the pandemic gets under control and stressors alleviate it is hopeful that substance use and overdoses will decrease over time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit www.cdc.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.