

September 21, 2017

Chairman Shelby
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Culberson
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Serrano
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Shaheen, Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Serrano,

As representatives from the treatment, law enforcement, public health, and criminal justice community, we write to you in support of funding for the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. Our nation is at a crossroads where we face huge challenges as a result of the opioid epidemic while urgently needing to improve relations between the public and law enforcement. LEAD is a program with a track record of tackling both these important issues.

LEAD is a pre-booking diversion program that grants police officers with the discretionary authority to redirect low-level offenders – typically drug-involved – to case managers as soon as they are identified as participants. By connecting drug users to vital community-based services instead of arresting and charging them, the state can preserve expensive criminal justice system resources. LEAD programs in several states have demonstrated the potential to reduce recidivism rates by as much as 60%. The University of Washington has discovered a range of short- and long-term outcomes through a two-year evaluation of the LEAD program including: reductions in drug use and related harms; recidivism; cost-savings; improvements in health with better psychosocial functioning; employment; and family/community involvement; positive impacts on the community; and racial disparities in drug law enforcement.¹ Thus, LEAD not only reduces the harm a drug user can cause to themselves and to their community, but it generates savings for the state in the long-run. When LEAD is operated with fidelity to its core principles, it can be expected to accomplish these goals.

The opioid epidemic has been a crisis that our country has struggled to deal with. It is a critical situation that needs fresh ideas and innovative approaches. LEAD is one such program. LEAD recognizes that we cannot incarcerate our way out of this problem and that individuals struggling with drug addiction need treatment and other social services, rather than jail.

We were pleased to see the Senate award \$2.5 million in the 2018 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill for the creation of a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) grant program. As of today, 28 states are either exploring, developing, launching, or operating a LEAD program.² These include Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Our request is that, as the House and Senate negotiate a final spending bill, the Senate funding for LEAD remains intact.

¹ <http://leadkingcounty.org/lead-evaluation/>

² <https://www.leadbureau.org/>

Your support is key to having all options on the table as we tackle the opioid crisis together and grant law enforcement all the tools they need to properly serve their communities.

Sincerely,

Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CHOW Project, Honolulu HI
Chief Brian Manley, Austin, TX Police Department
Chief Eddie Salame, Grapevine Police Department Grapevine, TX
Chief Fred Ryan, Arlington, MA Police Department
Chief Steve Moore, Hurst Police Department Hurst, TX
Christian Gossett, Office of District Attorney, Winnebago County, Wisconsin
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
Contra Costa County Public Defender's Association (CCCPD Association)
Dan Satterberg, King County Prosecuting Attorney
Denver District Attorney's Office
District Attorney Kim Ogg, Harris County, TX
Deputy Chief Mitch Cunningham, Chief of Patrol Bureau, Wilmington Police Department, North Carolina
Dow Constantine, King County Executive
Drug Policy Alliance
Family Reentry, Inc.
Greater Hartford Harm Reduction Coalition, Inc.
Harm Reduction Action Center in Denver.
Helping Hands Hawai'i
Jeanne Kohl-Welles, King County Councilmember
Jeff Adachi, San Francisco Public Defender
Jon Tunheim, Thurston County, Washington, Prosecuting Attorney
Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy
Katal Center For Health, Equity and Justice
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Lisa Cook, ACSW, LSW, CSAPA, Executive Director, KU ALOHA OLA MAU, Hawaii
Lisa Herbold, Seattle City Council member
Living In Freedom Together in Worcester Ma
Michael J. Yaniero, Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police, Jacksonville, North Carolina
North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition (NCHRC)
Pretera Center for Mental Health Services, West Virginia
PRO-ACT Public Policy Committee
Robert S Jacques, Behavioral Health Advisory Board, Pierce County, WA
Southern Colorado Harm Reduction Association
The Center for Harm Reduction Therapy
The Council of Southeast Pennsylvania, Inc.
The Louisville Metro Criminal Justice Commission
Van Ingram, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy
Vera Institute, New York
Washtenaw County Community Mental Health