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Albany, New York
12203
518-487-4395
www.FOR-NY.ORG

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February 20, 2018

Dear Senator/Assembly Member:

Friends of Recovery – New York (FOR-NY) is pleased to support the NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, Inc. in their efforts to implement jail-based substance use disorder services.

Despite increasing evidence that addiction is a treatable brain disease, most individuals do not receive evidence-based treatment, and even fewer are assisted in their withdrawal with appropriate medication. Involvement in the criminal justice system often results in participation in illegal activities that are a direct result of the brain being hijacked from drug use.

While state and local leaders have done much to bolster prevention, treatment and recovery services, individuals involved with the criminal justice system are much more likely to die from a drug overdose than the general population. Treating individuals humanely with the use of medication if needed, who have been incarcerated as the result of their drug use, provides a unique opportunity to decrease substance use and reduce associated behavior.

There is ample evidence that points to the substantial public safety benefits to integrating the criminal justice sector with drug treatment and recovery-oriented systems of care. Treatment for incarcerated individuals have already resulted in a 28% reduction in recidivism through the Albany County Sheriff's Heroin Addiction Recovery Program (SHARP) and a 50% reduction in recidivism in Monroe County jails. These reductions have direct implications in decreasing public sector costs and in saving human lives.

We ask you to support the funding proposal that is being put forward by the NYS Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, in coordination with the Sheriff's Association and the NYS Association of Counties (NYSAC). The requested funding would support treatment and transition services inside the jails and takes advantage of a unique opportunity to offer treatment to those who might be receptive.

Providing evidence-based therapeutic opportunities and engaging participants provides real opportunities for the criminal justice system to improve public health and reduce recidivism. Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Campbell, FOR-NY Executive Director