

March 23, 2021

Senator John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senate
530 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cornyn and Whitehouse:

We write in support of the Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment Act of 2021. As you are aware, the need for substance use disorder treatment during incarceration is great. According to a 2019 report by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, more than half of the individuals in prison have been diagnosed with a substance use disorder, and 15 percent of those in jails have an opioid use disorder.¹

Further, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, while overdose deaths were already increasing in the months preceding the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the latest data reveal an acceleration of overdose deaths during the pandemic. Over 81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period.² In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened our country's addiction crisis.

We strongly support the Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment program because it provides funding, training and technical assistance for states and local governments to develop and implement critical substance use disorder treatment programs in state, local, and tribal correctional and detention facilities. The program also assists with efforts to create and maintain community reintegration services for individuals after they are released from incarceration, thereby facilitating an individual's successful re-entry home.

The Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment Act of 2021 reauthorizes the program for the next five years at \$40 million annually. It also makes important improvements to the program, including:

- encouraging and supporting the expansion of clinically appropriate use of overdose reversal medications and medications for addiction treatment;
- allowing treatment programs to enroll pretrial detainees;
- requiring all treatment services to adhere to established clinical standards; and,
- requiring the appropriate medical personnel in a Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment-funded prison or jail to complete training on clinical issues related to the treatment of addiction in a carceral setting, including the use of medications and behavioral interventions for treatment of

¹ This includes 1.5 million who met the DSM-IV medical criteria for substance abuse or addiction and another 458,000 who did not meet the DSM-IV criteria but had histories of substance abuse and were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of their crime, committed their offense to get money to buy drugs, were incarcerated for an alcohol or drug law violation, or shared some combination of these characteristics. ADD CITE

² Overdose Deaths Accelerating During COVID-19, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p1218-overdose-deaths-covid-19.html> (December 17, 2020).

substance use disorders, and on development of a plan for ensuring all inmates in a funded program are able to access appropriate treatment upon return to the community.

Aside from helping to break the cycle of addiction, the Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment program reduces costs to states by reducing recidivism and therefore the expense of drug-related crimes and associated incarceration costs. In this way, it keeps communities safer.

As illustrated by the signatures below, this bill is supported by a broad and dedicated coalition of national organizations focused on criminal justice and behavioral health issues. We thank you for your leadership on this issue and for your efforts to ensure that the Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment program continues.

Sincerely,

Addiction Policy Forum
American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence
American Jail Association
American Psychological Association
Center for Court Innovation
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Correctional Leaders Association
Council of State Governments Justice Center
Dismas Charities Inc.
Faces & Voices of Recovery
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
International Community Corrections Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association of Counties
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Association of Police Organizations
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Commission on Correctional Health Care
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Criminal Justice Association
National District Attorneys Association
National League of Cities
National Police Foundation
National Sheriffs' Association
WestCare Foundation