**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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***Leading Addiction Scientists Warn*: *Proposed Federal Budget Cuts Will Devastate Research, Treatment and Prevention of Addiction and Overdose and Reverse Gains***

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Leaders of 33 organizations representing more than 33,000 addiction scientists, health practitioners, and policy experts signed a Statement of Concern, urging Congress to take immediate action to reverse the deep, sweeping cuts to federal agencies and programs that support scientific advancements, treatment services, and prevention programs, which have significantly reduced addiction and related illness, disability and death. The Addiction Science Defense Network (ASDN) organized the effort.

In 2023, 48.5 million people aged 12 or older (or 17.1%) had a substance use disorder in the past year. The annual economic impact of substance misuse is estimated to be $249 billion for alcohol misuse and $193 billion for illicit drug use.

The FY 2026 federal budget as outlined in the so-called "Big, Beautiful Bill" would result in unprecedented disruptions to research and services critical for reducing substance use in youth, preventing overdose, supporting recovery, and protecting public health.

"These cuts will kneecap our future ability to address overdose epidemics," said Elliot Stein, PhD, former Branch Chief at the National Institute on Drug Abuse Intramural Research Program. "We are not only dismantling current systems—we are preventing development of the next generation of solutions."

"This is not cost-cutting. This is sabotage," said Thomas Babor, PhD, MPH, an addiction policy expert, emeritus at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Some of the most damaging features of the bill include:

- **A threat to treatment access for the roughly 1 million people who receive medication for opioid use disorder through Medicaid.** As noted by U.S. Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH), this legislation "jeopardizes addiction care just as our country is finally starting to see progress in addressing the fentanyl crisis."
- **A 50% staff reduction and restructuring of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**, slashing overdose prevention, medical screening, and treatment dissemination programs across the U.S.
- **Significant cuts to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),** including public awareness campaigns, recovery support, and real-time surveillance of substance use and overdose trends.
- **Drastic reductions in National Institutes of Health (NIH) overhead allowances**, threatening lab operations, research materials, and essential support staff at universities across the country.

- **Termination of NIH-funded scientists, trainees, and labs,** disrupting ongoing research on addiction, trauma, and mental health, as well as the training of the next generation of scientists.
- **Freezing and eliminating international prevention programs delivered through the World Health Organization (WHO) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**, weakening our ability to monitor global drug supply chains and contain HIV and Hepatitis C transmission, which often co-occur with addiction
- **Gag orders** placed on scientists and journal editors in federally supported communications.
- **Pre- and Postdoctoral training cuts**, reducing support for the next generation of addiction researchers and creating an impending gap in the treatment workforce.

"We cannot afford to let politically motivated disruptions erase decades of bipartisan investment in science and community health," said Cassandra Boness, PhD, an addiction psychologist, Assistant Professor of Psychology at The University of New Mexico.

**What Congress Must Do**

The ASDN urges Congress to:

- **Enforce legislative control** over federal science, treatment and prevention funding and protect it from political interference.
- **Launch oversight investigations** into DOGE's indiscriminate targeting of grants, contracts, and research that affect patients, programs, and scientific productivity.
- **Demand cost-benefit evaluations** of the impacts of these policies on rates of crime, employment, overdose, mental health, homelessness, and child maltreatment.
- **Explore new funding mechanisms**, such as modest excise taxes on alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and gambling, which are proven to reduce substance use and fund public health.
- **Invest in prevention strategies** shown to significantly and cost-effectively reduce initiation of substance use in young people and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

**The Benefits of Addiction Science, Treatment and Prevention are Clear**

- Every $1 invested in NIH research returns ~$2.50 to local economies.
- Addiction treatment yields $58 for every $1 spent.
- Substance use prevention programs for youth yields $100 for $1 spent.
- Prevention programs yield up to $7 in savings in criminal justice costs for every $1 spent.
- Health care saves $4 for every $1 spent.
- Overdose deaths dropped 26% in 2024, a reduction driven by the very programs now targeted for defunding.
- Accessible care for addiction prevents caregiver mental health problems, job loss, children from being placed in foster care, and overdose deaths.

To view the full Statement of Concern and list of signatories, click here.

**About ASDN:**

The Addiction Science Defense Network (ASDN) is a national coalition of senior researchers, public health experts, and policy leaders working to protect the scientific integrity, infrastructure,

and implementation of addiction-related research and public health programs. It operates under the National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives.