



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

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C.H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

January 25, 2018

The Honorable Douglas Ducey, Governor
State of Arizona

Re: **Special Opioid Legislative Session**

Dear Governor Ducey:

In response to your state of Public Health Emergency Declaration, the Pima County Board of Supervisors, on June 20, 2017, passed Resolution 2017-42 calling for additional support and funding the address the devastation associated with substance misuse. The Special Session of the 53rd Legislature is a concrete step in appropriately equipping local jurisdictions with both the legal tools and resources to confront this issue.

Although we are generally supportive of many of the proposed initiatives, the list is notable for the absence of remedies or resources to improve the availability of harm reduction programs such as needle and syringe exchange. With the notable exception of Pima County, these programs largely operate in the shadows and serve substance involved population with supplies and referrals to treatment services. Harm reduction strategies were discussed by your task force and are alluded to in recommendations of the Opioid Overdose Epidemic Response Report. Decriminalizing and supporting these types of services are critical and concrete strategies to confront the opioid crisis in Arizona. House Bill 2389 provides important legal protections for the operators of these services and we urge you to support this legislation.

Additionally, the decriminalization of narcotic and drug related offenses remains a barrier for addicted individuals seeking services. Drug and paraphernalia drop-off as envisioned by House Bill 2001 does not provide adequate immunity to individuals relinquishing controlled substances or to the law enforcement agencies providing the referral. If substance involved individuals and their families, perceive these barriers they will be unlikely to avail themselves of these services.

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Although House Bill 2001 expands the ability of County Health Departments to distribute naloxone kits, it does not provide resources for the procurement of this expensive pharmaceutical nor the staffing to train potential users of this life-saving intervention. Based on our own experience it is not sufficient to simply distribute free kits to at-risk populations, local health departments need the human resources to do the harm reduction education and referral to treatment and medical resources for those in need.

We remain very concerned that no resources or strategies are proposed to facilitate primary prevention of substance abuse among school age populations. The most cost effective action we can take as government is to keep addiction from occurring among our children. School districts lack the expertise and resources to accomplish this complex task and any meaningful strategy must include these components.

Finally, more funding is needed for programs like Pima County's Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison (DTAP) Program and Drug Court, proven solutions that save money, save lives and reduce recidivism. Three independent cost-benefit analyses have shown that DTAP has saved millions of dollars in State funding related to prison housing costs. Pima County requests funding for these programs from the Substance Use Disorder Services Fund.

Again, we applaud your leadership in convening the Special Session to focus much needed attention and financial support on the issue of opioid and substance misuse across Arizona.

We are committed to working with you locally as we develop new approaches to what has become a chronic problem.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/anc

c: The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney
Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Assistant County Administrator for Community and Health Services
Amelia Cramer, Chief Deputy County Attorney
Michael Racy, Racy Associates, Inc.