

Good afternoon, Chair Ronan, and honorable members of this committee. My name is Jeannette Zanipatin and I am the CA State Director for Drug Policy Alliance or DPA. DPA is a national organization working for over 20 years promoting drug policies grounded in science, compassion, health, and human rights.

I am here to urge the SF BOS to adopt a health hub model in San Francisco mirroring what New York has been able to accomplish by establishing an operable overdose prevention programs/safe injection sites. We know that community driven treatment with proper social support leads to more successful outcomes. Ensuring that communities have access to critical harm reduction services such as syringe exchange services leads to individuals five times more likely to seek treatment and three times more likely to stop using drugs according to the CDC. SF must continue to build the harm reduction infrastructure with local approaches including health or wellness hubs that are well-resourced and ready to meet the needs of the clients and communities they serve.

With countless lives at stake, it's time to divest from failed interventions of the past and look to effective approaches to reduce drug-related harms by making evidence-based treatment available on demand and to increase access to health and wellness hubs. Additionally, the need to provide culturally appropriate and in language services are critically important to address the specific needs of the Latinx and immigrant community in San Francisco. This must also include community education, deep rooted outreach and engagement, and meaningful access to treatment. Similarly, any approach to address the overdose crisis in San Francisco must also look to providing culturally relevant and targeted approaches for African Americans in San Francisco given the unprecedented number of individuals in this community who are dying from overdoses. African Americans in San Francisco are dying from overdoses at a rate of 418 deaths per 100,000 yet make up less than 5% of the population in San Francisco. This alarming overdose rate is nearly five times the overall rate for the general population.

DPA strongly urges the Board of Supervisors to work with the Mayor's office, City Attorney's office, DPH and other key agencies & community stakeholders to implement the health and wellness hubs in alignment with the New York model.