

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\* STATEMENT \*\*\***

**JOINT STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION TO A LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE  
TO THE OVERDOSE CRISIS IN SAN FRANCISCO**

As organizations that advocate to improve the health of our communities and provide direct services to those most directly impacted by the overdose crisis – including residents of the Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods in San Francisco — we are deeply concerned about the overdose crisis and the impact of increased law enforcement presence on the safety of our communities. We believe all residents, including those in historically low-income neighborhoods, should feel safe walking on the street, gathering outside with neighbors, and bringing their children to school.

We appreciate our city and state governments recognizing that drastic action needs to be taken to immediately improve community conditions and tackle the overdose crisis; however, we are disappointed by the decision of Mayor London Breed, San Francisco city officials, and Governor Gavin Newsom to prioritize a law enforcement-first approach to matters of public health. Bringing in the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and National Guard to San Francisco is not only a waste of community resources, but it will inflict harm and potential violence on the most vulnerable in San Francisco. We have long recommended evidence-based solutions, which have never been fully funded, and we vehemently oppose the regression to punitive responses to illicit drug use, which has not and will not solve the overdose crisis.

This law enforcement operation, implemented without coordination with the Department of Public Health or community-based organizations that work directly with people who use drugs, is counterproductive, poses a serious threat to the safety of our communities, and will exacerbate the overdose crisis. This harm has already begun. According to the City's own data, as arrests and prosecutions have increased over the past quarter, so, too, has accidental overdose mortality, with a record 200 overdose deaths from January through March. This is also a matter of racial justice. [The Guardian](#) reported that during the past quarter, "A third of the overdose victims were Black, despite Black people making up only 5% of the city's population."

San Francisco cannot afford to return to approaches that have been tried and failed for decades at reducing drug overdoses. The legacy of the War on Drugs is the destabilization and criminalization of our communities, mass incarceration, and persistent, intergenerational harm. Incarceration and interdiction have not and will not improve community safety.

Rather than focusing on ineffective and expensive supply-side disruptions that are without an evidence base, our leaders must invest in comprehensive approaches that address the social determinants of public health in order to save lives. A lack of appropriate services, including no replacement services following the closure of the Tenderloin Center in December 2022, have contributed to untreated substance use disorder.

We recommend investing in evidence-based solutions to reduce overdose deaths, promote pathways to treatment, and improve community conditions, including: overdose prevention centers; safer supply; drug adulterant testing; culturally and linguistically appropriate access to medication for substance use disorder treatment; overdose reversal medication and overdose prevention trainings; funding to support tenant-led overdose navigation in supportive housing; support and resourcing for syringe services programs and safer use supplies; counseling and outreach to people who use drugs; access to housing and increased subsidies for permanent supportive housing, including for immigrants and non-citizens; peer-led programs; and access to accurate, compassionate, culturally responsive, linguistically accessible, fact-based drug education for youth, parents, and educators. This multifaceted public health approach has been proven to reduce drug-related harms and overdose, and is more cost-effective than law enforcement approaches, yet these strategies receive far lower investments.

We have and will always be part of the solution to increasing safety and reducing harm in San Francisco. We stand ready to continue and deepen our work with and for the community.

ABD/Skywatchers  
ACLU of Northern California  
Any Positive Change Inc.  
Berkeley Free Clinic  
California Interfaith Power and Light  
Causa Justa :: Just Cause  
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice  
Coalition on Homelessness, SF  
Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing  
Drug Policy Alliance  
The Gubbio Project  
HealthRIGHT 360  
HomeRiseSF  
Hospitality House  
Humboldt Area Center for Harm Reduction  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
National Harm Reduction Coalition  
Safer Inside Coalition  
Safer Together  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
San Francisco Gray Panthers  
San Francisco Public Defender's Office  
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition - San Francisco Chapter  
Taxpayers For Public Safety  
SF Treatment on Demand Coalition  
Western Regional Advocacy Project  
Young Women's Freedom Center  
David Elliott Lewis, Co-Chair Tenderloin People's Congress