



April 28, 2025

Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky
Chair, Budget Finance, and Innovation Committee
City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Proposed Budget Cuts to Department on Disability Fiscal Year 2025-2026 - OPPOSE

Dear Councilmember, Yaroslavsky:

On behalf of the Drug Policy Alliance, I write to express our opposition to the Department on Disability's (DOD) proposed budget for fiscal year 2025-26, specifically as it relates to the cuts to the HIV/AIDS prevention work under the AIDS Coordinator's Office (ACO).

The Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) is the leading organization in the U.S. working to enact health-centered approaches to drugs. We support holistic approaches to drugs that prioritize health, equity, social supports and community wellbeing.

This is a time when we must increase, rather than cut services to individuals most at risk of overdose death and health conditions resulting from infectious disease. People struggling with substance use in the city need better connections to appropriate care within their communities that are easy to obtain. Los Angeles must focus on protecting efforts and investing in programs that serve at-risk individuals in the community: more outreach services, drop-in centers, housing stabilization services, drug checking, and other harm reduction programs that provide points of entry to treatment.

The mayor's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year will significantly reduce key programs aiming to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS and overdose related deaths in the City of Los Angeles. Specifically, the budget proposes a 33 percent total contractual services reduction, including 44 percent cut to HIV/AIDS prevention work. These cuts will put the health and well-being of vulnerable Angelenos at risk.

A reduction in services provided by the AIDS Coordinator's Office will jeopardize the city's effort to connect individuals at risk of acquiring HIV and/or experiencing an overdose to healthcare, housing, and substance use services. These cuts will leave thousands of people, mostly people of color and unhoused, without access to HIV testing and overdose prevention resources such as naloxone contributing to increased overdoses. Drug overdoses remain one of the top five causes of death for the unhoused population in Los Angeles. In 2022 and 2023, there were reportedly 2,139 drug overdose deaths among unhoused individuals in southern LA County, out of those

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1,930 drug overdose deaths occurred in Downtown LA/Skid Row, Westlake/MacArthur Park, and adjacent areas.¹ Without the ACO work the loss of life would certainly be much higher in the future.

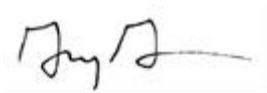
The proposed cuts will not only undermine community health but also their safety. Pulling funding away from HIV prevention and harm reduction capacity will eliminate opportunities to learn and share information about best practices and emerging trends on drugs and drug use. Community-based harm reduction programs are one of the cornerstones to improve the health of people who use drugs and the surrounding community by making sterile syringes accessible to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and facilitating safe disposal of used syringes. ACO-funded syringe service programs safely collected and disposed of over a million syringes in FY 2024.

Reducing contractual services will substantially reduce harm reduction services that facilitate safe disposal of syringes, promote better health for individuals needing support, and create pathways to other needed services.

We urge you to reject the proposed cuts to ACO and work with the Department of Disability to find a viable path to preserve critical HIV/AIDS and overdose prevention related services.

Thank you for considering our position and request.

Sincerely,



Grey Gardner
California State Director
Drug Policy Alliance

¹ "Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Center for Health Impact Evaluation. Mortality Rates and Causes of Death Among People Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County: 2017-2023" Department of Public Health, accessed on April 28 2025, http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/chie/reports/Homeless_Mortality_Report_2025.pdf

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