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**Physicians, Former U.S. Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey:  
“Cutting Drug-Treatment Costs More than it Saves,  
Threatens Public Safety and Health**

***Would Cost State \$85 Million in Federal Funds to Save \$53 Million;  
Cost Up to \$700 Million for Jails, Emergency Room Visits, Intensive  
Care Units, Foster Care, Courts, and Prisons;  
Cut is Life-Threatening for 3,500 Patients***

SACRAMENTO, CA – Physicians who treat 35,000 drug-addicted Californians, two drug-treatment patients, and Four-Star General and former U.S. National Drug Policy Director Barry McCaffrey today announced their opposition to the governor’s proposal to eliminate Medi-Cal funding for drug treatment, saying it would cost much more than it saves, including foregoing \$85 million in federal funds. California Opioid Maintenance Providers (COMP), a coalition of community-based drug-treatment clinics, said the proposal to effectively eliminate California’s Drug Medi-Cal program would do irreversible damage to individuals, businesses and communities. “35,000 people addicted to drugs will hit the streets the day after their treatment is withdrawn. Many of these individuals have already been to prison multiple times. Their lives are now stabilized and they are in treatment, but that stability will end with this cut,” said Jason Kletter, Ph. D., president of COMP. “Studies prove that most of these individuals will relapse to heroin use. The governor’s proposal will immediately increase crime, and cause chaos in our hospitals and other social services. The costs are much greater than the savings.” An estimated 80 percent of the 35,000 people in treatment will relapse to drug use within a year, resulting in increased costs to the state of \$700 million in drug-related public safety costs, criminal justice costs, emergency room

expenses, and foster care costs, not to mention the lost tax revenue when individuals are no longer able to work.

McCaffrey, who joined the doctors and patients at a State Capitol news conference, said: “35,000-40,000 people will immediately have to go to hospital emergency rooms if drug treatment is closed down, or they may go to jail. It would be catastrophic to their lives, families, school, and jobs – and would cost the taxpayers far more than continuing treatment programs. The state would give up the matching funds from the federal government -- more than the \$53 million the state now covers.” McCaffrey said, “This makes no fiscal, social or health policy sense. National studies have documented that methadone treatment saves the taxpayers \$12 for every \$1 spent. California studies put the figure at \$7 return on each \$1 invested in treatment. I urge California to sustain the drug treatment program, or the consequences would be devastating, not only for these individuals, but for California communities as well.”

Dr. Jack McCarthy, a psychiatrist and Medical Director of Bi-Valley Medical Clinic in Sacramento, said, “To stop effective treatment for 35,000 addicts will cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, as these sick individuals seek drugs through crime, or medical care through emergency room visits. Cutting this funding is guaranteed to cost much more than it saves, increase crime and send thousands of productive citizens back into a vicious cycle of crime and illness.”

Dr. McCarthy said, “These patients are one of the sickest populations, and taking away treatment will cause a medical catastrophe. Many suffer from liver, lung and heart failure. Ten to fifteen percent of them, at least 3,500, would have life-threatening conditions imposed upon them if forced to withdraw from drug treatment. Many more will end up in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) at very high cost – paid for by Medi-Cal, the very expenditure the governor is trying to reduce.”

Dr. McCarthy said, “Closing these drug treatment clinics would cause a public health crisis that affects all of us. Many of these addicted individuals have infectious diseases, like tetanus and hepatitis, that pose a threat to public health. Forced withdrawal will throw these people into psychiatric crisis. Many of these patients suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. There will be suicides, and our psychiatric units will be flooded.”

Steve Day, of Camarillo, a former U.S. Marine who served in Vietnam and developed a drug addiction there, told the news conference, “I got hooked while serving in the Vietnam War. I took amphetamines to stay awake on night duty, and

depressants to sleep during the day. After I left the Marine Corps, I stole cars and burglarized homes to support my drug habit. I served time in prison for those crimes. This drug-treatment program has helped save my life. I have been on methadone for 11 years. I pay for my own treatment, but cutting state funding will close the clinic, and patients like myself who can pay, won't have anywhere else to go. I would lose my job, my family and my life as a viable member of my community.”

Rose Henderson, of Stockton, told the news conference, “I became addicted to heroin as a teenager. I would rob and steal to buy drugs. I did everything but kill or prostitute myself to support my habit. I spent over 25 years in prison. Now, I am clean and am reunited with my child, my grandchildren and my family. If methadone treatment is taken away, I can't say what would happen. I want to stay drug-free and healthy.”

Powell Kennedy, 24, of Elk Grove, told the news conference, “Like many of my generation, I became addicted to heroin at a young age, just 17. It destroyed my life, as I stole from my parents and others. I have been through many treatment programs, at least 8, that did not work. But now, I am successful because of the methadone treatment. I am a full-time student at Cosumnes River College, majoring in business. Eliminating this program will harm me and many others, as well as our communities.”

**Increased costs due to drug addicts losing medication:**

- Emergency Room Visits
- Intensive Care Unit (ICU) stays (heart, lung, liver failure)
- Psychiatric services
- Increase in city and county jail inmates
- Increase in state prison inmates
- Increase in children needing foster care
- Increase law enforcement costs to respond to drug-related crimes
- Risk losing federal health block grant funds due to lack of maintenance of effort (MOE)

**Additional cost increases:**

- Lost tax revenue as employed addicts lose jobs
- Increased unemployment and general assistance costs as addicts lose jobs
- Human costs of crime, broken families, lost health
- Increase cost to Victims of Violent Crime fund
- Increased unemployment as 3,000 clinic jobs are eliminated

**Some facts about Drug Medi-Cal and methadone treatment:**

- Drug Medi-Cal pays about \$400 per month per patient for treatment
- A National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) study found that methadone treatment reduced participants' heroin use by 70%, criminal activity by 57%, and increased their full-time employment by 24%
- The financial costs to California of untreated opiate addiction are about \$2 billion per year.
- These costs, combined with the social costs of destroyed families, destabilized communities, increased crime, increased disease transmission, and increased health care costs, mean that opiate addiction is a misery not only for affected addicts but for their communities as well.
- Heroin addicts risk premature death and often suffer from HIV, hepatitis B or C, sexually transmitted disease (STDs), liver disease from alcohol abuse, and other physical and mental health problems.
- Most long-term heroin addicts are constantly involved in criminal behavior.

Other organizations joined COMP and McCaffrey in announcing their opposition, including: California Medical Association (CMA); California Narcotic Officers' Association; California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAMS); California Psychiatric Association; California State Association of Counties; and, California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors.

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