



## **Lee Baca and Charlie Beck: Restore methadone funding**

*By Lee Baca and Charlie Beck*

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THE proposed state budget cuts \$55 million out of the Medi-Cal methadone program for 35,000 individuals in California. It is tantamount to destroying the lives of 35,000 people, as well as having them return to addiction. The impacts are significant, and go beyond the patients themselves.

This particular initiative will result in the elimination of funding and the closure of drug treatment facilities. That will directly impact our county jails, our state prisons, parole and probation departments, as well as hospital emergency rooms and public health programs.

The elimination of the state's drug treatment funding would strain public safety programs and increase the number of relapsed individuals who are incarcerated.

These programs save our communities a significant amount of money by keeping people from using illegal drugs and seeking to support their addictions through criminal behavior.

The state budget reduction of \$53 million will result in a crime increase that will cost taxpayers as much as \$700 million.

Los Angeles County has 10,000 people enrolled in our drug treatment facilities. The predictability of 80 percent of those individuals returning to their addiction has dire repercussions. The average \$31,000 per year expense per inmate in our jail system will be the substitute cost for the reduction in drug treatment funding.

Heroin addiction is a drain on our economy and affects our hospitals, jails and courts. More than 200 crimes are committed each year by heroin addicts

supporting their habits. These are avoidable consequences for the addicts who have made a conscious choice to improve their lives through methadone treatment. Not only are their lives better, but also less costly for us all.

Sensible drug treatment and recovery programs eliminate extraordinary criminal justice costs because the person doesn't have to commit a crime to support his or her drug habit.

Is California going to lead the way in reducing drug addiction? Not by eliminating these programs.

We are asking for common sense in Sacramento. We're asking to preserve \$53 million in funding that is helping people who are addicted stay drug-free. The methadone solution has been working and needs to be supported. The federal subsidies that match state funds would be a greater loss above and beyond the \$53 million in state funds. We could lose more than \$100 million in federal funding.

The choice is either to pay a sensible amount now or continue to pay a spiraling, unreasonable amount in the future.

**Lee Baca is the sheriff of Los Angeles County. Charlie Beck is the chief of police for the city of Los Angeles.**

For more information, please visit [www.savemedi-caldrugtreatment.org](http://www.savemedi-caldrugtreatment.org)

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