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**Los Angeles Sheriff Baca, Police Chief Beck, Physicians:
Eliminating State Drug-Treatment Funding Would
“Strain Public Safety Programs”**

***Cost LA Up to \$175 Million for Jails, Emergency Room Visits,
Foster Care, Courts***

MONTEREY PARK, CA - Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca and City Police Chief Charlie Beck today joined physicians who treat 11,000 drug-addicted Los Angeles County residents at a news conference where Sheriff Baca said the governor’s proposal to eliminate state funding for drug treatment “would strain public safety program,” and cost up to \$175 million dollars.

“These programs save our communities a significant amount of money by keeping people from using illegal drugs, and seeking out their addictions through criminal behavior,” said Sheriff Baca. “The elimination of the State’s drug treatment funding would strain public safety programs and increase the amount of relapsed individuals that are incarcerated.”

One patient, Ben Lopez, 73, of East Los Angeles, told the news conference that he has been a heroin user since he was 16 years old, “I spent 17 years in prison from trying to support my drug habit. I have multiple health problems, including Hepatitis, hypothyroid and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Because of methadone treatment, I’ve gotten my family back. I have a positive way of life. If you take away my methadone treatment, you will put me right back in prison. I don’t want to go back to prison, but I know that I will do whatever I have to do to halt the sickness caused by my drug addiction.”

Dr. Roger Donovanick, Medical Director for Matrix Methadone Clinic in Los Angeles, said, “Eliminating the drug Medi-Cal program would have life-threatening medical consequences for hundreds of disabled Los Angeles-area patients. Their health and lives would be endangered if they were forced to withdraw from methadone treatment. Many are far too ill to survive. These patients

would overwhelm our emergency rooms, intensive care units and psychiatric wards. Forced withdrawal would cause chaos in their families, jobs and communities, as their health and ability to function in their work and social life deteriorates. Most will relapse into addiction and seek opiates through other, illegal channels. I call upon the governor to withdraw this harmful proposal.”

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. “11,000 Los Angeles county patients 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.”

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 Sheriff Baca in 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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