

County Executive
David Villanueva

Governmental Relations and
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Elisia De Bord



County of Sacramento

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June 5, 2024

The Honorable Matt Haney
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5740
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2115 (Haney). Health Care Coverage: Emergency Medical Services.
Support (As amended May 20, 2024)

Dear Assembly Member Haney:

On behalf of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, I write to support your AB 2115, which expands efforts to prevent overdose deaths and improves access to healthcare for our most vulnerable residents.

The overdose crisis is one of the most significant public health issues in California. Preventable drug-related overdose deaths have doubled since 2017. In 2021, almost 11,000 people in California died from overdoses - of these deaths, nearly 6,000 were due to opioid-related overdoses.¹ Significant inequities exist with Black/African Americans being disproportionately affected as they represent just 6% of the California population but 13% of all overdose deaths.

Opioid-related overdose hospitalizations for Black/African American residents of Sacramento County have increased steadily since 2014 and age-adjusted overdose death rates for this population have consistently been higher than the overall county since 2019. Despite comprising about 10% of the County population, Black/African American residents accounted for 20.6% of all opioid-related overdose deaths in 2021 and 25.1% of all opioid-related hospitalizations in 2022.

Expanding access to methadone for vulnerable populations is essential to address the overdose crisis. Methadone is a gold standard medical treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD) and is the most well-studied pharmacotherapy for OUD. Methadone reduces all-cause and overdose mortality, increases treatment engagement, and prevents harm related to injection drug use.

People with an OUD face multiple barriers to accessing methadone for the treatment, as it can only be dispensed in a limited number of situations. Federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) recently increased the situations when methadone can be provided and now allows clinics to dispense 72 hours of methadone while referring a person to an Opioid Treatment Program (aka methadone clinic). However, current California law does not fully align with this new DEA flexibility. AB 2115 would address this issue and allow clinics to dispense 72 hours of methadone

¹ Fentanyl & Opioid Overdose Prevention. CDPH. 2023. [Link](#)

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while referring a person to a methadone clinic. This will allow people increased access to methadone for the treatment of OUD while waiting to enroll in a methadone clinic, such as on weekends and evenings. Overall, this change would lower the barrier to patients receiving opioid withdrawal management services, improve linkage to longer term treatment at methadone clinics, and reduce ongoing opioid use and overdose risk.

Substance use disorders, especially opioid use disorder, continue to be a significant issue in the County. With increased access to this treatment, we will be better able to address the needs of individuals suffering from these issues.

For these reasons, Sacramento County supports AB 2115. Please feel free to contact me at (916) 874-4627 or deborde@saccounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Elisia De Bord
Governmental Relations and Legislative Officer

cc: Sacramento County Delegation
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
Audrey Ratajczak, Cruz Strategies