



410 NE 18th Ave  
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LatinoNetwork

www.latnet.org  
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Co-chairs Senator Lieber and Representative Kropf and members of the committee,

Latino Network programs focus on education, advocacy & leadership, health & wellness, economic & housing justice, youth empowerment & violence prevention, and arts & culture, engaging nearly 11,000 community members throughout the metro tri-county area. Latino Network currently provides direct services to youth and families in Senate Districts 13 and 19-25 and House Districts 25, 37 and 42-50.

At Latino Network we provide prevention, diversion and reentry programs for youth and adults. Key to our approach is a family inclusive service model. Criminalization is never limited to the person arrested, it always has broader impacts on family and community members. Our providers have presented nationally on their program because of the generational success they are able to achieve, with consistent and person centered, culturally grounded services.

Diversion is not something that happens after arrest, it happens before arrest. If someone has already been arrested, that is no longer a diversion program engagement, it is a reentry or pre-trial intervention.

Criminal records hinder access to the very things needed to increase likelihood of attaining and maintaining recovery and personal stability. They limit the effectiveness of the interventions that people who advocate for forced treatment through criminalization advocate for. Many of the consequences of criminalization impact people at the exact wrong time, when they are trying to rent a new home, get a job or promotion, impeding the ability to meet personal goals that help keep people confident in the journey of recovery.

- Be sure, arrests where charges were never brought, arrest for charges that were dismissed, arrests for charges that were exonerated and even arrests and charges that were expunged can and still show up on someone's background check and will be used to deny housing and employment.

On cost, jail health services, court mandated services or crisis services do not bill insurance (public or private). This lets insurance off the hook in a massive way, effectively taking the entity with the most funding available to address these health care needs off the table.

And we must not forget, that as drug policy has shifted, moving from felony to misdemeanors, the Criminal Justice Commissioner policy papers showed that the racial disparities in arrest continued to persist. Re-introducing criminalization will have a disproportionate impact, there is no reason to believe it won't.



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This isn't to say that individual people in the law enforcement system can't be helpful, of course they can be. You heard in several presentations today, the law enforcement system is not the source of solutions. But, in many advocate's stories you will hear them talk about that one officer or that one judge that saw them as a person with potential. There is no reason officers today couldn't be sharing information on how to connect with services during a possession ticketing encounter. There is nothing stopping first responders, officers or any other caring person from knowing who the healthcare and Behavioral Health Resource Network providers are in their community and sharing their information with those seeking services.

To ensure a successful path forward we should must stay focused:

- Success of decriminalization is limited to avoid long-term collateral consequences that maintain people in a cycle of crisis and use
  - Giving up and quitting on decriminalization, misses the point and pulls energy away from the incredible need we have to ensure a complete and easily navigable healthcare system
- We need substance agnostic/polysubstance affected responses
  - Removal of prior-authorization, regional investment plans to scale up prevention and capacity of health care services
- We need collaborative leadership that is coordinating the whole continuum rather than different government bodies owning different parts of the work which results in limits on people and providers being able to move across the continuum
- We need to grow our capacity large enough to have vacancy - space in shelter, affordable housing, residential treatment and recovery housing - so that a safe place to sleep is always available.

Lastly, accountability is not the same as punishment, these are not synonyms. Peer support and mentorship, a community of love and high expectations offers real opportunities for accountability and long-lasting improvements in health and social engagement.