

GREATER HARLEM
COALITION

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March 25th, 2021

Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, MS, LMSW
Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)
501 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10018-5903

Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, MS, LMSW
Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS)
1450 Western Avenue
Albany, NY 12203-3526

Re: Oversaturation of Drug Clinics & Treatment Centers in Harlem

Dear Commissioner González-Sánchez,

Our community is contacting you to respectfully request the diffusion and dispersion of the overly dense concentration of opioid treatment programs in Harlem and East Harlem.

This request is a matter of the highest priority for our community. The families, schools, churches, and business owners of Harlem have long sought a meaningful reduction of the burden that OASAS-licensed programs place on an already vulnerable community. The reasons for this urgent request are as follows:

- 1) **Our streets are flooded with “high-need” individuals.** The heavy concentration of OASAS-licensed programs in Harlem brings into a small geographic area an unconscionable number of people who are suffering from multiple (and complex) issues such as mental health ailments, homelessness, and substance-abuse disorders. This creates an unacceptable pre/post-treatment street culture. Our community is already burdened by poor health outcomes, the impact of historic redlining, and environmental racism. By licensing so many OASAS programs in our struggling community, OASAS has consciously or unconsciously become a participant in the structural racism that profoundly impacts the residents of our community every day as they head to work, shop in a local

business, or try take their children to school. Our community has documented the nexus of OASAS-licensed programs in Harlem and sites where:

- Filthy sidewalks are prevalent;
- Criminal activity is more densely centered, overwhelming our police precincts and contributing to Harlem being the 2nd highest crime rate neighborhood in all five boroughs of New York City;
- Illegal drug dealers congregate; and
- Mass transit users report the greatest dissatisfaction with safety and cleanliness in adjacent subways, buses, and train lines.

2) **Residents near OASAS-licensed programs report their quality of life being severely affected.** Harlem's unusually high density of drug treatment facilities and clinics has had a devastating effect on the daily lives of the people of Harlem:

- Families do not feel safe walking the sidewalks with their children. This fear persists during daytime hours, not just at night;
- Commuting workers are fearful of entering mass-transit entrances, such as the Metro North station at 125th & Park and the subways at 125th & Lexington and 125 & Lenox;
- Retailers experience greater rates of shoplifting, disturbances, and often have to take on the additional cost of hiring security guards;
- Restaurants note that customers report being uncomfortable and do not return;
- Business offices are reluctant to open in the neighborhood. The recently rebuilt landmark "Corn Exchange" office building at 125th & Park has been vacant since it opened, five years ago. No businesses will occupy space there due to the heavy presence of loitering and open drug use.

3) **There is a disproportionate concentration of facilities in our area.** Compared to other communities, Harlem is burdened with an unusually high number of drug treatment facilities. Wealthier and often whiter communities within the five boroughs have successfully prevented drug treatment facilities from being sited in their neighborhoods. Harlem and East Harlem have, however, been packed with OASAS-licensed facilities. The staggering number of clients flowing into these clinics every day, and their tendency to linger and congregate – before and after treatment – profoundly impacts the perception of safety for our residents.

Harlem is home to the highest concentration of low-income families in New York City. Our densely residential neighborhood is not equipped to handle the burden that such a large number of drug treatment facilities and clinics brings to our area. Therefore, our community requests immediate relief. Specifically, we ask that OASAS:

- Cease licensing new programs in Harlem and East Harlem;
- Cease the renewal of licenses for existing OASAS-licensed programs that operate within a two-block radius of any other OASAS-licensed program in Harlem and East Harlem;
- Cease the expansion of any existing OASAS-licensed programs in Harlem and East Harlem;

- Produce a plan to redistribute OASAS-licensed programs more equitably in all New York City neighborhoods.

We invite you to meet with us to discuss this in further detail, or to schedule a walking tour with us to fully experience the severity of this issue. Please contact Shawn Hill at 860.398.0938/tetshill@gmail.com for additional information or to schedule an appointment.

Sincerely,



Syderia Asberry-Chresfield.



Carolyn A. Brown PHD.



Shawn Hill

Founders of the Greater Harlem Coalition (an organization of 6,000 residents, businesses, and churches in Harlem. <https://greaterharlem.nyc/>)

cc: Manuel Mosquera, Director of Regional Operations
 Trisha Schell-Guy, Acting General Counsel
 Patricia Zuber-Wilson, Associate Commissioner
 Pat Lincourt, Director
 Connie Burke, Acting Associate Commissioner
 Keith McCarthy, Associate Commissioner
 Vittoria Parry, Fiscal Associate Commissioner
 Dr. Marc Manseau, Medical Director
 Peggy Bonneau, Director of Health Initiatives
 Edison Alban, Director of Communications
 Jannette Rondo, Director of Internal Communications
 Sean M. Byrne, Deputy Commissioner
 Robert A. Kent, General Counsel
 Henri Williams, Director of Housing Services
 Tracey Collins, Director, Government Affairs and Federal Policy
 William F. Hogan, Associate Commissioner

The Greater Harlem Coalition is comprised of the following tenant associations, churches, schools, businesses, cultural institutions, and retailers:

Block Association of West 118th Street
 100-168 West 121st Street Resident Block Association
 118 Street Block Association
 120th Street Block Association
 124 East 117th Street Tenants Association
 125th Street Business Improvement District
 128th Street Block Association
 1775 Houses Tenants Association
 314 - Pizza, Pasta & Wine Bar

97-98 Lexington & Park Ave. Neighbors
 A. Philip Randolph Square Neighborhood Alliance
 A.K. Houses Tenants Association
 Advocates 4 The Community
 Asberry and Associates, LLC
 ATAPE Group, LLC
 CentralCasting Solutions LLC
 Chaiwali
 Chocolat Restaurant & Bar

CIVITAS
Clay
Columbus Distributors
Compass Realty
Covington Realty Services
D and D Enterprise
Dorrence Brooks Property Owners &
Residents Association
DR3J Consultants
Edward Jones
Elaine Perry Associates
Ephesus SDA Church
Eye Cycle
Freeland Liquor
Friendly Hands Ministry
Friends of the Harriett Tubman Monument
Future Giants Organization
Gastiaburo + Stella Real Estate
Ginjan Cafe
Graham Court Renters Association
Greater Calvary Baptist Church
Hakimian Organization
Halstead Manhattan
Hamilton Terrace Block Association
Harlem American
Harlem Arts Foundation
Harlem Business Alliance
Harlem Lacrosse
Harlem Lofts
Harlem Neighborhood Block Association
Harlem Park to Park
Harlem Properties Inc.
Harlem Shake
Harlem Wine Gallery
HarlemHome
HarlemHoopz
Il Cafe Latte 1
Il Cafe Latte 2
Indian Summer Harlem
Jacqueline Allmond Cuisine INC
Le Petit Parisien
Lenox to 5th 124th Street Block Association
LenoxFive 127th Street Block Association
Lido
Malcolm Pharmacy
Mirada Home Owners Association
MoHo Dance
Mount Morris Park Community Improvement
Association
MXB United

Neighbors United of West 132nd Street
Block Association
New 123rd Street Block Association (Lenox
- 7th)
New York Council for Housing Development
Fund Companies, Inc.
Open Hands Legal Services
Paris Blues Jazz Club
Pativity, LLC
Progressives Educating New Yorkers, Inc.
R. Kenyatta Punter and Associates
Rubys Vintage
Sayers and Doers
Silent Procession Nyc4pr
Silicon Harlem
SottoCasa Pizzeria
StreetSquash
Sugar Hill Concerned Neighbors Group
Super Nice Coffee and Bakery
T.H.E. Works
Union Settlement House
United New Church of Christ
Upholstery Lab
Uptown Democratic Club
Uptown Townhouse
Valeries Signature Salon
Virgo Hardware
West 119th Block Association
West 121st Street Block Association
West 126th Street Block Association
West 130th Street Homeowners Association
West 132nd Street Block Association
West 135th Street Block Association
West 136th Street Block Association
Wynn Optics