
NAN and Greater Harlem Coalition Request to meet with OASAS Commissioner

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To: Jesse Campoamor <jesse.campoamor@exec.ny.gov>

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Good Day Jesse,

The National Action Network and the Greater Harlem Coalition are requesting an in-person meeting with the commissioner of NYS run OASAS substance abuse centers. The deplorable conditions of my beloved Harlem community cannot continue as currently constructed and we wish to discuss ways to improve public safety, quality of life, and hold service providers accountable for the distress inflicted on residents of Harlem.

The Harlem community is under constant duress. Our seniors live in fear of unprovoked attacks. Women fear to walk the streets unattended after dark. Parents are forced to push baby strollers through huddles of drug users and dealers. Children on their way to and from school are exposed to drug use on our streets leaving an undoubtedly harmful impression on their minds at the earliest stages of their development. Our small businesses, reeling from the economic fallout of the pandemic, struggle to attract the foot traffic needed for their businesses to grow and remain viable; further undermining the economic recovery of the Harlem community.

The concentration of addiction treatment facilities in Harlem attracts drug dealers, who prey on this vulnerable population, and perpetuates surging gun violence as gangs compete for dominion. OASAS data has shown that over 75% of the people who utilize addiction treatment facilities in Harlem reside or travel from other parts of the city, many from the buses of Ward's Island and some as far as Westchester. This issue is compounded by the systemic failure within the administration of adult-only homeless shelters. Whereas many adult-only shelters in Harlem lack adequate supportive services, resigning the homeless to languish in the streets with little hope of permanent housing.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Our goal is to reduce the capacity of the adult only shelters and methadone clinics in Harlem. Harlem together has 13% of NYC's adult only shelters and 18% of methadone distribution capacities while only having 4% of New York's total population. As your 2021 State of the State so aptly pointed out, the crisis of COVID-19 "held up a magnifying glass to our society," and "opened people's eyes to the inequality rampant across the country." I look forward to your continuing commitment to tackle the needs and challenges that COVID magnified and to address present structures that allow inequality to persist in our beloved village of Harlem.

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<https://nationalactionnetwork.salsalabs.org/marchonforvotingrights0>

In Solidarity,

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