



# New York Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

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June 22, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

On behalf of the New York Society of Addiction Medicine (NYSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in New York who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to sign S1795, which would improve access to treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) in New York's jails and prisons. People with SUD are incredibly vulnerable to relapse and overdose when they are released from jails and prisons, but we have several highly effective, FDA-approved medications that can reduce overdose-related mortality by half or more. By signing this legislation, you will expand access to life-saving treatment for New Yorkers struggling with addiction.

What makes this legislation so important is that it would provide access to first-line treatment for SUD in all New York State correctional facilities. Incarceration is often a "reachable moment" when people with SUD are motivated to seek treatment for the disease that has harmed them and their families. This legislation would lift the standard of care in all jails and prisons across the state by expanding on the lessons learned from effective initiatives such as the Key Extended Entry Program (KEEP), which has successfully offered medications for addiction treatment (MAT) in New York City jails for decades.

MAT is well-studied, safe, and effective – for many people with SUD, it is their best chance to break the cycle of incarceration, relapse, and recidivism. Starting medications in jail or prison can be the first step on the path toward recovery. Offering MAT can also create more orderly correctional facilities. Medications reduce painful withdrawal symptoms and ongoing craving for substances, which minimizes demand for contraband substances within the facilities. The successes from jails in Albany County and New York City should be models of effective and compassionate care for the rest of the state.

NYSAM's members work in jails and prisons, see patients in the community who are referred by the criminal justice system, and study ways to best treat SUD. We are enthusiastic to partner with jails and prison to create a seamless pathway from starting treatment in jail or prison to continuing evidence-based treatment in the community.

Sincerely,

Timothy Wiegand, MD, FACMT, FAACT, DFASAM  
President, New York Society of Addiction Medicine