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PRESS STATEMENT

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Grandstanding Politician Fuels Drug Overdose Crisis

SAN FRANCISCO - Once again, a politician, this time District 6 Supervisor Matt Dorsey, seeks to advance his political career by using vulnerable populations and press releases to gain attention while accomplishing nothing for people living in poverty and dying on our streets everyday.

Instead of working with health experts, his colleagues, and the Mayor, Supervisor Dorsey has made it a habit to tweet out sexy press releases moving the goalposts on years of carefully crafted work that he supported just weeks earlier. Politicians like Supervisor Dorsey are why we can't make headway on the overdose crisis in San Francisco.

Over the last few years the Department of Public Health and Mayor's Office have been involved in - SEVEN - well researched and vetted plans to address the drug crisis on our streets: Mental Health SF, the [Overdose Prevention Plan](#), Treatment on Demand, Supervised Injection Task Force, Methamphetamine Task Force, Drug Dealing Task Force, and the Tenderloin Emergency Center.

Each of these laws, task forces or emergency interventions have implementation plans - not one of which has been completed. All of these plans have involved time, expense, and most importantly significant expert input to create. Yet not one of these plans has been given the time or resources to fully implement.

The Department of Public Health continues to slowly but surely implement Mental Health SF and the creation of a network of Wellness Centers carefully crafted in the City's Overdose Prevention Plan. Both programs are meant to create the infrastructure necessary to provide treatment immediately when needed for anyone who voluntarily or forcibly enters care. Supervisor Dorsey supported this plan when he voted for the Budget just weeks ago and never attended one hearing to register his concerns when the Board's Budget Committee discussed the plans for a month in day long hearings.

Had Supervisor Dorsey paid attention at the appropriate times, he would know that the request for voluntary services at the one Harm Reduction Center that currently exists have risen from 150 people a day to 500 people. These are 500 individuals with a drug addiction illness seeking

voluntary help every single day from just one center in his District that cannot meet the demand. The funded Wellness Centers are designed to meet this demand.

Instead Supervisor Dorsey urges the Mayor to move the Wellness Center money to jail health services. Supervisor Dorsey wants to arrest and jail the way out of the overdose epidemic - a strategy used during the drug wars in this country that have been widely discredited. Additionally, if Supervisor Dorsey had been listening to the actual people doing the work he would know that the Director of Jail Health Services presented recently at the Health Commission explaining her inability to fill the dozens of funded but vacant positions in Jail Health.

The Mayor with the support of the Board of Supervisors funded three Wellness Centers in the Budget very thoughtfully. We funded those Centers as part of the implementation of a holistic system of care delineated in Mental Health SF and the Overdose Prevention Plan. Both plans have the full support of the Health Department whose leaders helped design these interventions after following decades of evidence about how to best help individuals with drug addiction disorders.

Political antics allow two people a day to continue dying from overdose in San Francisco. It's time for politicians to step aside and let the doctors, psychiatrists, and social workers fully implement the half dozen solutions they have already created to address this crisis. As a City we need to have patience and persistence to back our health department. San Franciscans are losing faith in politicians like Supervisor Dorsey who are good at working the media with fancy press releases but bad at rolling up their sleeves, collaborating without fanfare, and doing the hard grueling work behind the scenes that truly saves lives. San Francisco has been governed by press release for years and it has consistently failed us.

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