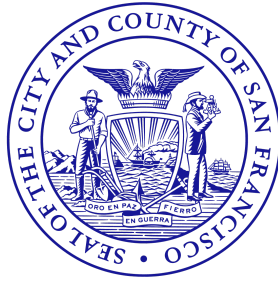


City and County
of San Francisco



Member, District 6,
Board of Supervisors

MATT DORSEY

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NEWS RELEASE

Dorsey urges reallocating ‘Wellness Hub’ funding to jail-based services for drug-use detainees

With supervised consumption stalled, supervisor argues that \$18.9 million now budgeted for harm reduction sites would ‘be put to far better, more life-saving use’ as custodial care

SAN FRANCISCO (Aug. 4, 2023) — Supervisor Matt Dorsey today announced that he is urging Mayor London Breed to reallocate 100 percent of the \$18.9 million currently budgeted for “Wellness Hubs” over the next two fiscal years into services offered through the San Francisco jails for detainees arrested for public drug use or in need of care and services related to their substance use disorders. On Thursday, Dorsey withdrew his support for a proposed Wellness Hub in his district after plans for the facility dropped supervised consumption services from its core mission and narrowed from being one among several co-located sites citywide to a single location in the South of Market.

Originally intended to build upon the successful elements of the now-shuttered Tenderloin Center, Wellness Hubs reflected a strategy by the Department of Public Health to open as many as six smaller sites offering distributed overdose prevention services in multiple city neighborhoods that would include supervised consumption. With legal obstacles continuing to stall that approach, however, the District 6 supervisor sees significantly more urgency to use available funding to expand treatment and recovery options for individuals arrested for public drug use and other crimes as part of a needed expansion of law enforcement operations, which Dorsey supports to address what he calls “increasingly chaotic open-air

drug scenes and brazen drug dealing that are plaguing neighborhoods in District 6 and elsewhere.”

In a [5-page letter sent to Mayor Breed late yesterday](#), Dorsey wrote: “While I remain a staunch supporter of supervised consumption sites as an appropriate and necessary response to our record-shattering fatal drug overdose crisis, the inability of our City and its nonprofit partners to assume the requisite legal risks at this time to offer supervised consumption services diminishes the value of moving forward with the ‘half-loaf’ approach now contemplated by DPH for Wellness Hubs. Moreover, it makes little sense to me that we would fund and staff limited services for *voluntary* drop-ins by drug users at a time when we are endeavoring to engage with an *involuntary* population of drug users whose lawless conduct suggests a far more acute need for life-saving care and robust overdose prevention services.”

Dorsey’s move was applauded by advocates from the recovery community, including Cedric Akbar, executive director of Positive Directions Equals Change, which began as a support network for African Americans in recovery and now offers treatment programs for those with substance use disorders along with services for life skills, re-socialization training, parenting education groups, violence prevention, relapse prevention, drug education, and harm reduction education.

“I support Supervisor Dorsey’s call to reallocate Wellness Hub funding into jail-based treatment and recovery services, which will better serve detainees who are far more vulnerable to overdose risks,” Akbar said. “Until we come up with an alternative plan to incarceration, treatment is more effective than consumption.”

Dorsey’s letter praised Mayor Breed’s decision to create a Drug Market Agency Coordination Center in early June to disrupt, dismantle and deter the street-level drug markets. DMACC is in the process of coordinating stepped-up operations by the San Francisco’ Police Department, Sheriff’s Department, Department of Emergency Management and others, together with growing support from state and federal law enforcement partners announced in recent weeks by Governor Gavin Newsom and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi.

‘The massive scale of drug tourism we now face...’

Dorsey also expressed support for recently expanded operations by San Francisco police to begin making arrests of those *using* drugs in public under longstanding prohibitions in Cal. Penal Code. 647(f), for public intoxication or incapacity, and Cal. Health and Safety Code

11550, for being under the influence of a controlled substance without a valid prescription. The operations have revealed a “massive scale of drug tourism” in San Francisco, which Dorsey contends further argues for a sustained approach by law enforcement.

“I believe this approach is absolutely necessary,” Dorsey told Mayor Breed, “not solely to restore and maintain public order in affected neighborhoods, but to rethink a pattern of enablement causing so much human misery and worse. The new approach has also brought to light troubling revelations about the massive scale of drug tourism we now face, with the vast majority of those arrested for public drug use in our city being newly arrived from out-of-town locations. Recognizing that you and I are in strong agreement that we cannot allow San Francisco to be a destination city for public drug use, I offer my unequivocal support to sustain this approach moving forward.”

Statistics released by the DMACC in July showed that among the first 91 individuals arrested for public drug use under the new operation, only 7 had San Francisco addresses, representing just 8 percent of those arrested. Nearly half those arrested for public drug use during that time (45) were from counties elsewhere in California, while 30 percent (or 27 individuals) were from out of state.

Funded by the City Attorney David Chiu’s opioid litigation settlement dollars, the \$18.9 million now designated for Wellness Hubs in the Department of Public Health’s budget comprises two appropriations of \$11 million for Fiscal Year 2023-24 and \$7.9 million for Fiscal Year 2024-25. Dorsey concluded his letter to Mayor Breed by noting that “only by committing to provide these detainees with the best, most appropriate care possible through custodial treatment and recovery services will our response be worthy of the City of Saint Francis. I urge you to reallocate the \$18.9 million in funding currently identified for Wellness Hubs to this purpose, where it will be put to far better, more life-saving use.”

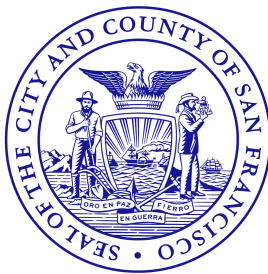
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For immediate release:
Aug. 4, 2023

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City and County
of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors,
District 6

MATT DORSEY

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August 3, 2023

The Honorable London N. Breed
MAYOR, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
City Hall, Room 200
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San Francisco, CA 94102

Emailed c/o: tom.paulino@sfgov.org

Re: Urging that funding for Wellness Hubs be wholly reallocated to jail-based treatment and recovery services to best serve detainees arrested for public drug use

Dear Mayor Breed,

This letter follows up on my advocacy to you and many others for more consequential criminal justice interventions around the increasingly chaotic open-air drug scenes and brazen drug dealing that are plaguing neighborhoods in District 6 and elsewhere.

Please know I appreciate your leadership in creating the Drug Market Agency Coordination Center, or DMACC, which has included stepped up operations by the San Francisco Police Department's Narcotics Detail, Sheriff's Department and others. With expanded support from our state and federal law enforcement partners, and the promise of nationally recognized expertise on drug market intervention strategies soon to come, I am optimistic about making real progress to disrupt, dismantle and deter the street-level drug markets that have robbed too many San Franciscans of the safe enjoyment of their own neighborhoods.

I applaud, too, your authorization for SFPD to begin making arrests of those *using* drugs in public, in violation of Cal.. 647(f) (for public intoxication or incapacity) and Cal. Health and

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Safety Code 11550 (for being under the influence of a controlled substance without a valid prescription). I believe this approach is absolutely necessary — not solely to restore and maintain public order in affected neighborhoods, but to rethink a pattern of enablement causing so much human misery and worse. This new approach has also brought to light troubling revelations about the massive scale of drug tourism we now face, with the vast majority of those arrested for public drug use in our city having out-of-town addresses. Recognizing that you and I are in strong agreement that we cannot allow San Francisco to be a destination city for public drug use, I offer my unequivocal support to sustain this approach moving forward.

In tandem with these arrests, however, I strongly believe we have a moral obligation to ensure that these necessary criminal justice interventions are given the best possible chance to be *life-saving* interventions, too, for those in our custody who struggle with substance use disorders. Accordingly, I write to urge you to reallocate 100 percent of the \$18.9 million in funding currently designated for “Wellness Hubs” over the next two fiscal years to jail-based treatment and recovery services, so that we may fully operationalize custodial detox, stabilization, assessment, treatment and referrals for this vulnerable population. I am informed that this use would fully comport with the terms of the City Attorney’s opioid litigation settlement.

While I remain a staunch supporter of supervised consumption sites as an appropriate and necessary response to our record-shattering fatal drug overdose crisis, the inability of our City and its nonprofit partners to assume the requisite legal risks at this time to offer supervised consumption services diminishes the value of moving forward with the “half-loaf” approach now contemplated by DPH for Wellness Hubs. Moreover, it makes little sense to me that we would fund and staff limited services for *voluntary* drop-ins by drug users at a time when we are endeavoring to engage with an *involuntary* population of drug users whose lawless conduct suggests a far more acute need for life-saving care and robust overdose prevention services.

I have had concerns, too, about the evolution of DPH’s Wellness Hub plans, which have not simply dropped supervised consumption as their defining rationale, but have also narrowed in scope from a proposed implementation of six separate sites in “the Tenderloin, SoMa, the

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Mission, the Castro, the Haight and the Bayview neighborhoods,”¹ to just three sites in the Tenderloin, SoMa and Mission neighborhoods — and then narrowed *again* to its current iteration: a single site in SoMa. I was not alone among my colleagues in believing that one of the more compelling value propositions for the Wellness Hub model was to distribute access points for services for drug users among multiple affected neighborhoods, so as to avoid centralizing a massive public nuisance as we saw at the Tenderloin Linkage Center. Moreover, I am unconvinced that the value of services offered at a 444 6th Street Wellness Hub location would be appreciably different than services already offered at the Harm Reduction Center at 117 6th Street — just four blocks away, and also in the district I represent.

DPH has itself identified the need to offer better support and connection to care to drug users during and immediately after their release from custody, and given the apparent dormancy of supervised consumption services for the foreseeable future, I believe it is imperative that custodial treatment and recovery services now replace Wellness Hubs as the primary strategic cornerstone in our City’s overdose prevention strategy. This would better fulfill our shared objective to “help improve the health of people who use drugs by directly connecting them to the continuum of services, including treatment, housing, and benefits assistance,”² and I believe it would be met with far broader agreement among San Francisco residents.

It is my hope that the custodial health services we would offer and incentivize for those struggling with opioid use disorders, in particular, would include immediate enrollment in medically assisted treatment, like buprenorphine or methadone, so that they may avoid the risks of diminished tolerance while being more effectively connected to treatment and recovery options. San Franciscans — no less than the San Francisco Superior Court judges who decide how long individuals remain in custody — should have every assurance that detainees arrested for acting out in their addictions will be afforded full access to state-of-the-art care and services, for their protection as well as that of the community.

¹ “SF Supervisors Rally for \$5.5M for Wellness Hubs After Plan Stalls” Sarah Wright, San Francisco Standard, Dec. 13, 2022, <https://sfstandard.com/2022/12/13/sf-supervisors-rally-for-5-5m-for-wellness-hubs-after-plan-stalls/> (accessed July 31, 2023).

² “Overdose Deaths are Preventable: San Francisco’s Overdose Prevention Plan,” San Francisco Department of Public Health, 2022. <https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/SFDPH%20Overdose%20Plan%202022.pdf>

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A core principle of harm reduction is to establish the “quality of individual and community life and well-being” as the criteria for successful interventions and policies.³ Similarly, San Francisco’s original harm reduction policy for substance use disorders — adopted some 23 years ago by our city’s Health Commission — noted its intent “to reduce adverse health effects to individuals, to individuals’ families and to the broader community.”⁴ In my view, the well-being of our *communities* has been too long forgotten in San Francisco’s approach to public drug use and open-air drug markets. Neighborhoods deserve harm reduction too, and the operation now underway to restore and maintain public order in affected neighborhoods is a welcome step — in District 6 and elsewhere — to right that past wrong.

However, only by committing to provide these detainees with the best, most appropriate care possible through custodial treatment and recovery services will our response be worthy of the City of Saint Francis. I urge you to reallocate the \$18.9 million in funding currently identified for Wellness Hubs to this purpose, where it will be put to far better, more life-saving use.

Thank you for your consideration of my request, Mayor Breed, and for your leadership to make progress on these difficult challenges. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this letter further with you or your staff. Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions or require any clarifications. Staff-level questions may be directed to my Chief of Staff, David Owen, at david.a.owen@sfgov.org.

Thank you!

Sincerely,



MATT DORSEY

³ Principles of Harm Reduction, National Harm Reduction Coalition, <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>. Accessed Aug. 1, 2023.

⁴ Resolution No. 10-00, Resolution of the Health Commission, City and County of San Francisco, adopted Sept. 5, 2000, <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/hc/HCRes/Resolutions/2000Res/HCRes10-00.shtml>. Accessed July 31, 2023.

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