

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2022

Mr. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We write to you today to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine the efficacy of the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program, currently administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Specifically, we would like to request that the GAO examine the ways in which DFC programming can be made more efficient and more culturally competent, in order to increase the program's effectiveness in diverse and underserved communities.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were over 107,000 overdose deaths in the United States in 2021; this represents the most ever recorded in a single year. While these numbers are staggering, they represent a small fraction of the over one million lives lost to overdoses in the past two decades. As the overdose rate continues to trend upwards, more must be done to stop this preventable loss of life. In order to stunt the relentless pace of overdoses, we need to examine ways in which we can not only reduce the supply of illegal narcotics, but also reduce the domestic demand for these drugs.

This past year, we served as members of the Bipartisan Commission on Combatting Synthetic Opioid Trafficking, which examined what underlying causes are driving the opioid epidemic in this country, both from the supply and demand sides of the issue. In February, the Commission issued over 70 policy recommendations the Federal Government can take to mitigate the human cost of this crisis, including reexamining laws currently in place to evaluate their effectiveness.¹

The DFC Support Program is a vital tool in the fight against substance use and substance use disorder. By mobilizing communities to help identify and respond to the drug problems unique to their neighborhoods, the program's collaborative approach creates a targeted plan aimed at tackling substance use at the local level. However, more can be done to target DFC programming in order to help reduce substance use and the progression to a substance-use disorder.

¹ Commission on Synthetic Opioid Trafficking, Final Report (Feb. 2022),
file:///C:/Users/ac82404/Downloads/RAND_EP68838.pdf.

Given the diversity of this country and the multitude of proposed solutions to reduce drug use and prevent and manage substance use disorder, the Commission concluded that the GAO should examine the DFC Support Program in order to evaluate which of the program's efforts are evidence-based and how they can be improved to help ONDCP ensure this program is focused on the most cost-effective efforts. GAO should also examine the ways in which programming can be made more culturally relevant in an effort to establish greater trust and meet the needs of the most marginalized and overlooked populations.

Increasing social supports for individuals, families, and communities can help prevent substance use and the progression to substance use disorder. It is our obligation to ensure the federal government is doing all it can to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of ONDCP's efforts in this area.

We appreciate your prompt attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,



David Trone
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator