

# Taking Action: Washington, DC and Federal Harm Reduction Policy

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**JUSTICE and equity For  
COMMUNITY Health**

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2nd  
annual



**DCengage™**  
harm reduction  
CONFERENCE

[DCengage.org](https://dcengage.org)

# Current Context: Intersectional Epidemics

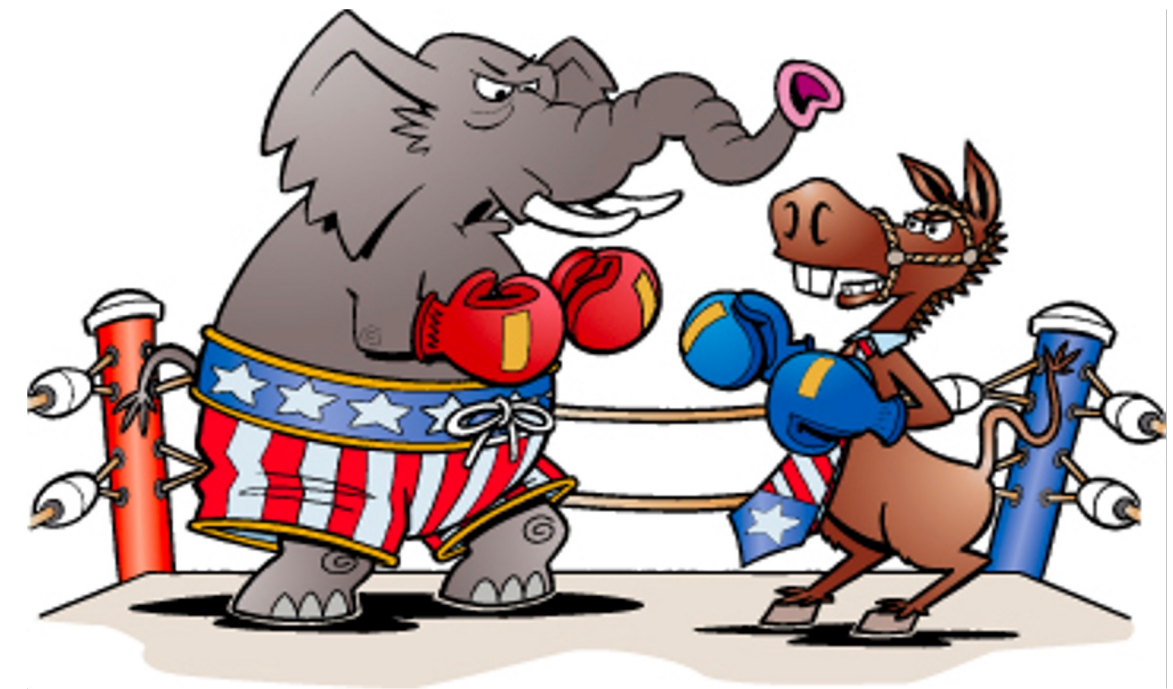
- COVID
  - Estimated 103,436,829 cumulative cases in the U.S. (WHO)
  - Total Deaths 1,132,872 deaths as of June 2023 (CDC)
- Hepatitis C
  - 14,863 deaths in 2020 (may have increased during COVID pandemic)
- HIV
  - 18,489 deaths among adults and adolescents with diagnosed HIV in the United States in 2020
- **Overdose**
  - **Nearly 110,000 annual deaths 2022 (More than 1 million overdose deaths since 1999)**

# Political Impact

- Health Disparities in the U.S.
- Epidemic Fatigue
- Distrust of Public Health - change in tone
- Adapting to new environment:
  - Bipartisan when possible, but not always required
  - Build out relationships
  - Persuade policy makers with:
    - Data & facts (local when possible)
    - Constituents
    - Policies that achieve equity and opportunity

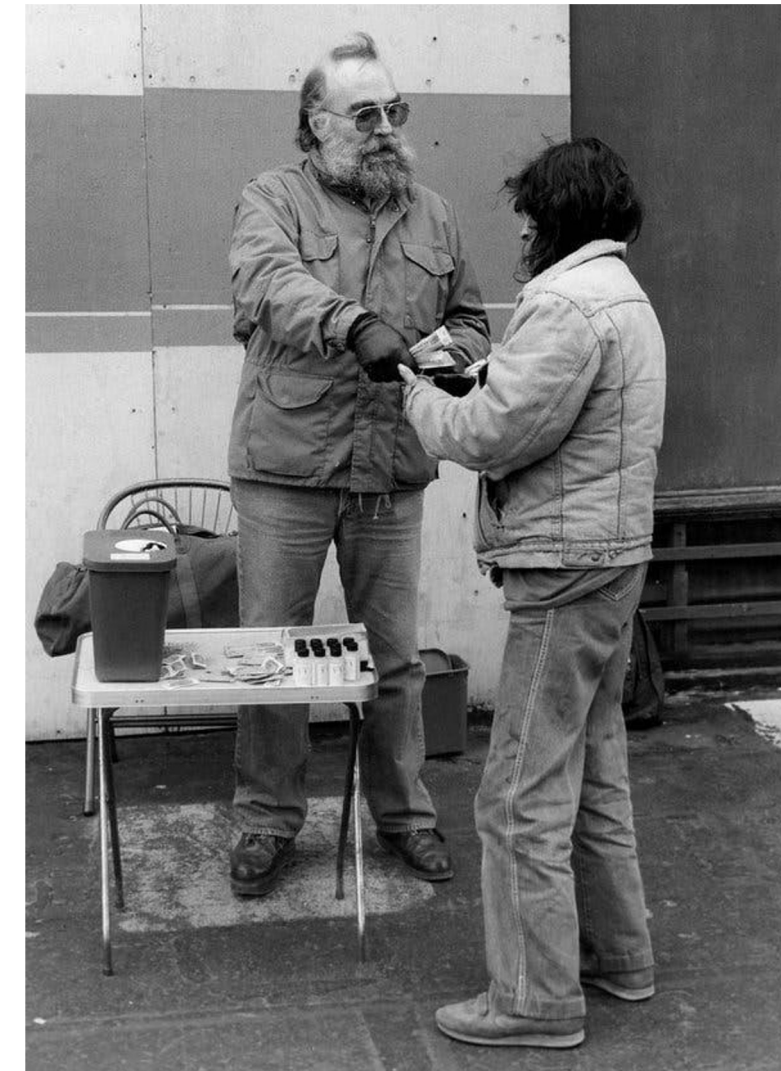
# Current Political Environment

- Partisanship interferes with every legislative activity
- Election cycle constantly considered:
  - New Majority in the House
  - White House is now reentering the Election cycle
  - Leadership and most members of Congress view each issue through the lens of the election
  - Hollowed out civil service contributes to inaction



# Harm Reduction as a National Issue

- Harm Reduction Included in the National Drug Strategy
- Syringe Services Programs
  - Subject to NIMBY fights
- Naloxone and Drug Checking
  - Frequently Supported (but support stops there)
- Overdose Prevention Centers
  - OnPoint (New York) - Open
  - Rhode Island – Opening in Spring
  - (First NIH/NIDA Study to be conducted by Brown/NYU)
  - Minnesota – Recent Enabling Legislation
  - Safehouse (Philadelphia) – Ongoing Litigation
- Media Impact
- Appropriations
- Funding - Opioid Settlement Funds





# Harm Reduction Community Federal Ask



Agency	FY 2023 Final (amount and increase)		FY 202 Community Ask
CDC	\$1.391B	+\$46.0 M	\$2.317B
Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Program	\$23M	+\$5M	\$150M
SAMHSA	\$7.5B	+\$970M	9.73B
SAMHSA (Community Harm Reduction and Engagement Initiative)	N/A	N/A	\$50.0M
<b>Report Language Request:</b>  <b>Remove bill language restricting the use of federal funds for the purchase of syringes while also not adding additional restrictions.</b>			

# Washington DC As a Source of Innovation

- 2006 – Ban on DC's Use of It's Own Tax Funds for Syringe Services Programs lifted
  - 2008 – Federal Funding Allowed for Syringe Services Programs for the First Time
  - 2010 – Federal Funding Rolled Back
  - 2016 – Federal Funding Except for Syringes Allowed
- 
- District of Columbia's needle exchange program prevented 120 new cases of HIV infection saving an estimated \$44 million over just a two-year period
    - Monica Ruiz, PhD, MPH, George Washington University



# Take Action: What Can We Do?

- Meaningful Involvement of People Who Use Drugs
  - Leadership voices for the people most impacted by drug use
  - Engage with National Survivors Union and local organizations who help organize people who use drugs in Washington D.C.
- Explain Harm Reduction, How does it impact you directly, how does your agency engage?
  - How does your agency engage?
  - What are the best practices?
  - Tell the stories of people most directly impacted.
  - What are your success stories ?
  - What are your missed opportunities ?



# Take Action: What Can We Do?

- Speak to Federal Administration and Legislative Leaders About Harm Reduction Needs in Washington D.C.
  - Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)
  - Financial Services Subcommittee
  - Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD); Chair, Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-TN), Ranking Member
  - Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR); Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), Ranking Member
  - ONDCP Director, Rahul Gupta; SAMHSA Administrator, Miriam Delphin-Rittmon
- Harm Reduction in DC
  - Mayor Muriel Bowser
  - City Council
  - Department of Health
  - Law Enforcement

# Take Action: What Can We Do?

“Who would have ever thought I’d get here? That I’d come full circle? That after all those years I’d get to help people out, people who were just like me?”

“The bottom line is it all starts and ends with you”

- Ron Daniels



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