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New York State Sheriffs' Association, Inc.

27 Elk Street, Albany, New York 12207

Phone: 518-434-9091 Fax: 518-434-9093

E-mail: sheriff@nysheriffs.org

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Thomas A. Mitchell, Counsel

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Dear Senator/Assembly Member,

I am writing to you today on behalf of my fellow Sheriffs in my capacity as current President of the New York State Sheriffs' Association. As Sheriffs, we are obligated by statute to operate county jails and provide for the health, safety and security of those persons who have been committed to our custody.

I would like to take a moment to draw your attention to an overlooked and underserved population that currently occupies our facilities—inmates who are afflicted with a substance abuse disorder. In many, if not most cases, people who are sent to jail—whether for pre-trial detention or to serve a sentence—are battling with severe addiction issues.

As Sheriffs, we are obligated under the constitution to provide healthcare services to jail inmates. But we are often limited in the services that we are able to provide due to the fiscal constraints of our budgets. Medical and behavioral health services for jail inmates are paid for with limited county money, as incarcerated individuals are ineligible for Medicaid in most circumstances. That being the case, some Sheriffs' Offices simply can't afford to provide effective substance abuse treatment and transition programs for their inmates.

And these programs are necessary. A New England Journal of Medicine study found that for the first two weeks after their release from a corrections setting, former inmates with an opioid use disorder were 12.7 times more likely than other individuals to die of an overdose. We are missing an opportunity to intervene in a profoundly positive way in these individuals lives. They are literally a captive audience when they are in our facilities. We should be doing more.

There is also a public safety benefit to be had here as well. Two counties in New York have been able to field exemplary jail- based programs in recent years and have reported significant reductions in recidivism as a result:

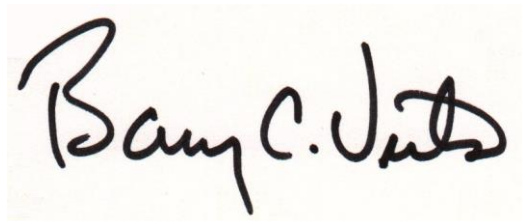
- Albany County Sheriff's Heroin Addiction Recovery Program (*SHARP*) – 28% reduction in recidivism
- Monroe County Chemical Dependency/Re- Entry Program – 50% reduction in recidivism

These reductions translate to significant future public savings. Every time someone does not re-offend, it is less of a burden on our police, our jails, our courts, our public defenders, our probation officers, and ultimately, our taxpayers.

For these reasons I'm asking that you support the enclosed funding proposal that is being put forward by the Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, in coordination with the Sheriffs' Association and the NYS Association of Counties (NYSAC). The requested funding would support treatment and transition services inside the jails and takes advantage of unique opportunity to offer treatment when an inmate is clean and sober. State funding for this important work would be a great benefit to all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration of the proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or my representatives at the New York State Sheriffs' Association if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Barry C. Virts" in a cursive, slightly stylized font. The first letter of "Barry" is a large, prominent capital 'B'. The signature is centered horizontally in the block.

Sheriff Barry Virts, Wayne County
President, New York State Sheriffs' Association