



Office of Addiction Services and Supports

KATHY
HOCHUL
Governor
CHINAZO
CUNNINGHAM, MD
Commissioner

February 18, 2025

RE: Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board

Dear Members of the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board,

On behalf of the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), and the Department of Health (DOH), we want to express our sincere appreciation for the time, expertise, and commitment you have devoted as members of the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board. The work of the Board has been instrumental in guiding New York State's response to the ongoing overdose crisis, and we value your continued dedication to this critical cause.

As you know, the Board's role, as established in the Mental Hygiene Law (§25.18) and the Opioid Settlement Agreements, is to provide guidance on the use of opioid settlement funds in ways that reduce opioid-related harm. Your third Annual Report, submitted on November 1, 2024, builds upon the recommendations provided in 2022 and 2023, offering a continued roadmap for addressing the overdose epidemic. We are grateful for the thoughtful proposals put forward in this report.

While the 2024 Annual Report was intended to serve as an update and expansion of previous recommendations, the Agencies remain fully committed to carefully evaluating each of the recommendations and implementing them wherever feasible. As with the previous years, we review these recommendations based in the context of state and federal law, rules and regulations, existing settlement agreements, and sustainability.

In accordance with Section V(B) of the Settlement Agreements, when the State chooses not to implement a recommendation, it is required to provide a written explanation within 14 days of the decision. The Board is then afforded the opportunity to respond within 14 days of receiving the explanation. The Agencies are currently reviewing all of the recommendations in the 2024 Annual Report and remain committed to acting on those recommendations that align with the standards above and that best address the ongoing epidemic.

However, as in previous years, we must inform you that the State is unable to move forward with the specific recommendations related to Overdose Prevention Centers and the recommendation to specifically provide funds to the Office of Drug User Health. This decision is consistent with the standards outlined above. Additionally, as noted in the 2024 report, certain positions expressed by the Board fall outside the statutory authority granted to the Board, and therefore the Agencies will not be addressing these positions directly.

We want to thank you once again for the ongoing work of the Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board. Your efforts are a critical part of New York State's strategy to reduce opioid-related harm, and we remain grateful for your continued collaboration in this essential work. Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of the people of New York State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chinazo Cunningham'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Chinazo' written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name 'Cunningham'.

Chinazo Cunningham

CC:

Governor Kathy E. Hochul

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader

Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie, Speaker

Senator Liz Krueger

Assemblymember Helene E. Weinstein

Senator Nathalia Fernandez

Assemblymember Phil Steck