May Newsletter

DPA Hosting Webinar on How the Drug War Obstructs Public Benefits – Part of Our Uprooting the Drug War Series

DPA will be hosting an online discussion on Public Benefits, the Drug War, and Denial of Benefits on May 26. This webinar is one in a series of six, part of our Uprooting the Drug War initiative, which exposes the consequences of the drug war in nearly every sector of civil life – education, employment, housing, child welfare, immigration, and public benefits.

For over 30 years, drug war policies have restricted access to important public benefits. The way people in the U.S. access — or more accurately are denied access to — public benefits has been closely linked with the way the drug war has impacted our thinking about drugs and people who use drugs.

The drug war inappropriately brands all people who use drugs and people suspected of using drugs as lazy, irresponsible, and not deserving of any public assistance. It disproportionately targets communities of color and depicts them as villains in the media. As a result, our vision of people who use drugs is so closely tied to people of color, Black people in particular, that the two are often seen as one and the same — despite the fact that people of color and white people use drugs at similar rates. This shows up in the racist (and false) idea of “drug-addicted welfare queens.” The drug war has painted entire communities as “unworthy” and, on that basis, has denied people critical public benefits necessary for health and well-being through mandated drug testing and other drug war tactics.

The drug war has its roots spreading throughout our communities, impacting nearly every aspect of our lives. It cuts off the very services that can sustain and preserve entire communities that are already wracked by economic insecurity. It’s still spreading — and we can do something about it.
That is why DPA is also working to build support for the MEAL Act, a new bill in Congress that would repeal the lifetime federal ban on people with felony drug convictions from receiving essential public benefits.

*Read our report, The Drug War Obstructs Public Benefits, which details the way that drug war policies have restricted access to public benefits.*

---

**DPA Statement on the Conviction of Derek Chauvin**

In response to the jury returning a guilty verdicts on all three counts for Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd, Kassandra Frederique, DPA's Executive Director, released the following statement:

“We never needed a trial or a jury to tell us how George Floyd died. We witnessed those painful nine minutes and 29 seconds with our own eyes. And the truth is, we have been witnessing Black, Latinx, and Indigenous lives being ruthlessly cut short at the hands of police, using drug involvement – whether perceived or real – as pretext, as long as we can remember.”

“Over the course of the trial, the defense brought in one witness after another not to prove Derek Chauvin didn’t kill George Floyd, but instead to prove that George Floyd was under the influence of drugs at the time of his death and in previous law enforcement encounters. This is a classic example of how the drug war has been used as an excuse for state violence.”

“It doesn’t matter if George Floyd was on drugs or not. He still deserved to live.”

“This verdict, for once, gives us hope that the days of this excuse still working are numbered.”

“But the fight is not over. Make no mistake, this will happen again and there will be other officers who try to escape all accountability. We must work to end the drug war, so that drugs can never again be used as an excuse to rob people of their dignity, their humanity, or their lives.”

*Learn more about drug war and policing.*
Biden Administration Doubling Down on Harmful and Racially-Disparate Drug Enforcement of the Past by Extending Trump Administration's Class-Wide Fentanyl Ban

In response to the Biden Administration and the Department of Justice announcing their support for a seven-month extension of the Trump Administration's temporary class-wide emergency scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, Grant Smith, Deputy Director of DPA’s Office of National Affairs, released the following statement:

"We can’t keep doing the same thing over and over expecting to get different results, and yet that is exactly what the Administration is doing when it comes to fentanyl. We’ve seen how this story plays out, specifically with crack-cocaine in the 1980’s. Law enforcement-driven, media-perpetuated hysteria results in severe mandatory minimum sentences and extreme racial disparities."

“At a time when policymakers are finally achieving progress on undoing these past harms, it’s incomprehensible how they could even consider putting new laws on the books that have the potential to recreate this pain and devastation on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities all over again. Because, make no mistake, these communities are the ones that have always borne the brunt of the drug war, and fentanyl will be no different. In fact, it’s already happening in the astronomical rise of fentanyl-related prosecutions we have seen thus far."

“We call on Congress and the Administration to rethink these efforts to double-down on fear-based, enforcement-first approaches, and instead invest in public health alternatives, such as the STOP Fentanyl Act being considered in the House, which provides a comprehensive health and evidence-based response to fentanyl and fentanyl-like substances."

Learn more about fentanyl policy.

DPA Clips, Podcasts, and Stories

FEATURED POST: No Stems, No Seeds, Only Justice
It’s 4/20! Celebrate #MarijuanaJustice values with us in this new t-shirt: No Stems, No Seeds, Only Justice.

store.drugpolicy.org/products/marij...

Support DPA by buying a t-shirt here

Follow DPA on Twitter.

DPA's Podcast, Drugs & Stuff: Movement for Family Power’s Lisa Sangoi on the Drug War and the Family Regulation System

DPA’s podcast, Drugs & Stuff, is back with a series of monthly episodes as part of Uprooting the Drug War – DPA’s new initiative to shine a spotlight on the insidious ways the drug war has spread into our lives. Each new episode features a DPA partner sharing their experiences fighting the drug war in one of six systems: child welfare and family regulation, public benefits, employment, immigration, housing, and education.

The first episode in the series features Movement for Family Power’s Co-Founder and Co-Director Lisa Sangoi and DPA’s Gabriella Miyares discussing the difficulties families face in the family regulation system, and what we can do to fight for family power. Movement for Family Power is one of DPA’s funded partners through our Advocacy Grants Program.

Listen now on our website or on your favorite podcast streaming platforms.
The podcast’s full back catalog can be found [here](#).

*Listen to the latest episode here.*

**California Senate Passes SB 57, Authorizing Life-Saving Overdose Prevention Programs in the State**

On April 22, the California Senate passed SB 57, a bill to bring overdose prevention programs to California, proposed by Senator Scott Wiener. If passed by the Assembly and the Governor, this bill would allow the opening of supervised consumption sites in the state.

"As the overdose crisis continues to tragically claim the lives of California residents and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, urgent action must be taken. By passing SB 57, the Senate has made it abundantly clear they are committed to doing whatever it takes to save lives," said Jeannette Zanipatin, DPA’s California State Director.

“Public health leaders across the state agree overdose prevention programs, as authorized in the state by SB 57, are the way to do it. These programs provide an evidence-based, cost-effective approach for us to save lives now, prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and connect people with other vitally important services – such as treatment, housing and other healthcare resources – which have been shown to improve health outcomes in the long-term.”

DPA – along with other co-sponsoring organizations, including the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE) – launched a vigorous legislative campaign to pilot overdose prevention programs in San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles County, where the homeless crisis continues to grow, overdose rates have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and fentanyl-related deaths are surging.

“Passage of SB 57 would bring CA one step closer to becoming the first in the country to use this strategy to address the overdose crisis plaguing our state and our country. Overdose prevention programs are proven to save lives and help people find a path to treatment and healthy lives," said Al Senella, President of CAADPE. “Overdose prevention is an important strategy to address the crisis of drug overdose in our state. In this time of the need for public health safeguards, California should be using all known and effective strategies to address the growing need for substance use..."
disorder services.”

Learn more about overdose prevention programs and supervised consumption sites.

DPA Factsheet Explores Impact of Drug Testing

DPA has released a new fact sheet exploring the harms of drug testing and why it must end. For the past 35 years, drug testing has been an essential, yet largely under-examined, pillar of the war on drugs. Millions have been drug tested in the places where we spend most of our waking hours – schools, jobs, and our homes – and throughout the criminal legal system.

Drug testing serves as another way to deny care and to target, surveil, and criminalize people – both those who use drugs and do not – particularly Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people, and low- and no-income people. Ending the drug war means ending drug war surveillance and stopping practices that monitor and punish rather than increase health, safety, and autonomy.

DPA has released a new factsheet exploring the harms of drug testing and why it must end.

Drug Policy in the News

Vox: The claim that drugs killed George Floyd relies on a racist trope

NPR: Critics Say Chauvin Defense 'Weaponized' Stigma For Black Americans With Addiction

Common Dreams: Biden's Embrace of Trump-Era Fentanyl Ban 'Threatens to Repeat Past Missteps,' Critics Warn

Vogue: The Women Fighting for Cannabis Justice and Data Transparency in the U.S. Prison System

AP: California Senate OKs Supervised Sites for Drug Use

Marijuana Moment: Advocates Float New Strategy To Pass Marijuana Legalization In Senate, With Democratic Support In Question
Put DPA in your will or estate plan. Find out more about how to join The Ashawna Hailey Planned Giving Society today.

You have received this email because you are a member of the Drug Policy Alliance mailing list.

Drug Policy Alliance
131 West 33rd St., 15th Floor New York, NY 10001

Unsubscribe - Contact Us