

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Applauds Biden administration's strategy to address opioid epidemic and substance use disorder crisis

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) announced the release of the Biden-Harris Administration's inaugural *National Drug Control Strategy*. The Strategy includes major elements championed by Senator Baldwin to combat the substance misuse epidemic.

"The opioid epidemic and substance use disorder crisis continues to touch every community across Wisconsin and the pandemic has only made this epidemic worse. Now is the time for bold action to save lives," **said Senator Baldwin**. "I am proud to stand with the Biden Administration in taking action to combat this epidemic with a comprehensive plan to support individuals and families facing addiction."

The Strategy focuses on two critical drivers of the epidemic: untreated addiction and drug trafficking. It instructs federal agencies to prioritize actions that will save lives, get people the care they need, go after drug traffickers' profits, and make better use of data to guide all these efforts. The United States reached new records in the number of drug overdose fatalities during the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 100,000 lives lost to drug overdoses between April 2020 and April 2021.

Included in the plan are several components Senator Baldwin has championed to help address the opioid and addiction epidemic:

- **Expand high-impact overdose death prevention interventions like naloxone.** The Strategy includes a strong focus on expanding access to harm

reduction interventions including naloxone, the life-saving opioid overdose reversal medication. It also prioritizes access to drug test strips and syringe services programs, and directs federal agencies to integrate harm reduction into the U.S system of care to save lives and increase access to treatment. The Strategy additionally calls for collaboration on overdose prevention between public health and public safety officials, and changes in state laws and policies to support the expansion of harm reduction efforts across the country. Senator Baldwin has worked to make naloxone more accessible, recently [leading a bicameral, bipartisan group of colleagues](#) in sending letters to seven major manufacturers of naloxone, urging them to apply for over the counter (OTC) status for their products to help save lives.

- **Expand access to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment for at-risk populations, including incarcerated individuals and those reentering the communities.** The Strategy includes proposals on improving care for at-risk populations, including incarcerated and reentering individuals, including calls for policy changes in line with Senator Baldwin's bipartisan [Medicaid Reentry Act](#) to restart health care coverage for people in the last 30 days of their jail or prison term.
- **A broad focus on better SUD data collection.** This includes a focus on historically underserved and understudied communities, including making sure that the drug misuse patterns of the LGBTQ community are specifically studied to better support this population. This provision is in line with Senator Baldwin's [LGBTQ Data Collection Act](#) to require federal surveys to include data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity on a voluntary basis, which would ensure lawmakers and agencies have robust information to adequately address LGBTQ issues.
- **A focus on preventing substance misuse among young people.** This includes increasing awareness campaigns and access to education and prevention and resources in K-12 and college settings. Senator Baldwin has long worked to curb teen nicotine use, supporting the introduction of the [Preventing Opportunities for Teen E-Cigarette and Tobacco Addiction](#) (PROTECT) and working to [hold e-cigarette companies accountable](#) for the youth vaping crisis.
- **Advance equity in investigation, arrest, and sentencing for drug offenses,** including addressing mandatory minimum sentences that prevent judges from considering mitigating factors for nonviolent crimes. This strategy supports Senator Baldwin's commitment to a fair justice system, as demonstrated by her co-sponsorship of bipartisan criminal justice reform

legislation, including the [First Step Act](#) and the [EQUAL Act](#), which would correct long-standing crack and powder cocaine sentencing disparities that continue to harm communities of color.

A fact sheet on the Strategy is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).