

Chair Williams

June 16, 2023

Re: Budget of SBC for FY 2023-2024 regarding the Fentanyl-Opioid Drug Crisis related to SBC Budget

Dear Chair Williams and Supervisors:

My name is Susan Horne, I have been a Health Educator for Public Health for over 30 years. Half of that time I worked in SBC PHD. I would like to share my perspective on the current Fentanyl/Opioid Crisis. I was thrilled to hear talk of PHD Director Hammami assembling a potential coalition to strategize and collaborate on prevention of drug use and abuse.

I recently spoke to Marge Gordon about her decades of work in the Alcohol Drug and Mental Health Dept. at SBC PHD prior to the initiation of Behavior Wellness. Marge Gordon was Director of the whole Prevention section of SBC Alcohol Drug and Mental Health.

There was a terrible drug crisis then too- with the national War on Drugs, especially heroin and cocaine. Under President Reagan, for example, we had Just Say No, the over-policing of black and brown neighborhoods, the start of mass incarceration especially of people of color and then militarizing police. All through this time, the Prevention side was receiving a lot of funding through grants, including Federal funding.

Marge oversaw years of County prevention efforts to reduce drug use, especially among youth. For example, Fighting Back, and Saturday Night Live Youth parties. All these prevention efforts by the schools and dedicated non-profits, were studied and evaluated by researchers at the Grad. School of Education at UCSB. These included researchers Michael Furlong (currently Emeritus) and Gail Morrison. Why not look at these results/reports again?!

A drug use survey was developed and given to High School students every year, and it is still an annual survey in SBUSD. The results then were *alarming* as there was no effective drop in drug use! The research does not say why, but Marge surmises it was mostly because the Prevention efforts were not reaching the kids who needed it the most. I assume those would be those students struggling in troubles such as social, behavioral or mental problems, learning problems, poverty, abuse and trauma at home?

The good news is that there was one program that worked! This evaluated program that worked was one initiated in the schools. The schools invited the mostly Hispanic parents/families to the school for a meal and meeting! It worked.

Why? Can you guess? I have yet to read the research for clues, but my educated guess is that the parents learned about the school, got familiar, and gave input and the children saw this then talked about it and all could support each other in valuing the school community and education. See what you think and ask friends and teachers why this worked? The research at UCSB and the Dept of Alcohol Drug and Mental Health PHD may shed light on this.

I also talked to the County School Superintendent, Susan Salcido, on Thursday. She confirmed that she supports a focus -prevention and interventions -meeting the individual and specific needs of each child.

The bottom line for Marge Gordan, long retired after decades in the trenches of drug prevention work, is that we need to **strengthen the institutions**. This means Schools and Public Health and others as well.

To me, it seems important for an effective comprehensive prevention plan, to include leaders in the institutions of Schools, Public Health, Social Services, Behavior Wellness, Law Enforcement. (and others?) One local model of an effective coalition was our PHD -led Partners for Youth, to reduce the rate of rising childhood OBESITY.

It took over 10 years but our county/city schools changed from fast food and sodas to healthy meals and popular salad bars and often school gardens!

I look forward to real comprehensive efforts to prevent toxic drugs causing future damage and deaths among our youth and our community, old and young, rich and poor, all of us!

Thanks for your consideration. I will support SBC in funding these desperately needed evidence - based efforts.

Sincerely yours,

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