

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

“FY 2021 Outside Witness Testimony”

**Statement of Hon. Stephen Manley, Judge, Superior Court of California, County of  
Santa Clara**

**on the Drug Treatment Court Program at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services  
on behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals**

March 23, 2020

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of this nation’s more than 4,000 drug treatment courts and the 150,000 people they will connect to life-saving addiction and mental health treatment this year. Given the unprecedented success of drug treatment courts and the growing need in communities around the country for solutions to the addiction epidemic, **I am requesting the Congress maintain level funding of \$70 million for the fiscal year 2021 Drug Treatment Court Program at the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).**

I serve as a judge in Santa Clara County, California where, for much of my twenty-five year tenure, I have presided over our county’s drug treatment court programs. I have never come across a more effective approach to promoting public health while protecting

public safety. Strong empirical evidence shows it reduces not only crime but also the heavy taxpayer burden wrought by an overcrowded justice system. In fact, I've dedicated much of my professional career to expanding the model as president of the California Association of Collaborative Courts and a board member of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Most importantly though, at home in Santa Clara County, I preside over our co-occurring drug court, veterans treatment court, and mental health court.

Over the course of my career, I've seen thousands of individuals cycle in and out of our justice system, committing crimes to sustain their addiction and cope with mental health disorders. Our drug treatment courts unite public safety and public health to connect offenders with the evidence-based treatment and social services they need put a stop to that cycle. We hold individuals accountable for their actions while addressing the underlying cause of the crimes they've committed, a process shown time and time again prevent it from happening again.

Santa Clara County is so committed to the drug court model that we now have four judges hearing treatment court cases every day of the week. Moreover, the jail population in our county fell from 4,300 individuals to 3,000 as the number of defendants ordered into treatment increases every year for the past five years.

As demand for treatment services in our justice system continues to rise nationwide, funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is critical to allowing drug treatment courts to expand and enhance treatment capacity. Expanded and

enhanced treatment capacity means more people like Mateo in Santa Clara County can end their cycle of substance use and crime.

Mateo a veteran of the United States Marine Corps who saw combat in three major conflicts. Over time, Mateo witnessed the death in battle of every soldier in his unit other than himself and one other marine who suffered severe lifetime incapacitating physical injuries. Mateo's own injuries, PTSD, depression and trauma led him to become addicted to drugs. When he returned home to Santa Clara County, he quickly became homeless, living on the streets for years when he wasn't in jail or prison.

Finally, after yet another arrest, Mateo asked to be admitted to the drug treatment court program. We accepted his request and he began a long and arduous journey through substance use treatment. With help from the court, Mateo secured permanent housing through the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program, giving him his first real home after years in the streets. After 18 months of intensive treatment and supervision, and with a new-found stability, he successfully completed program.

Now, two years after graduating the program, Mateo remains drug free and has not reoffended. In fact, he is a mentor to other veterans in our program and daily aids the homeless who live near his residence, assisting them in navigating through the services and treatment they need to survive and regain housing.

Mateo is just one example of the 150,000 people nationally who get access to substance use treatment through drug treatment courts each year. What started as an experiment more than three decades ago is today the most successful strategy for addressing addiction and mental health in the justice system. In fact, no other intervention in our nation's history has anywhere near comparable evidence of both reducing recidivism and saving taxpayer dollars.

The Government Accountability Office finds drug treatment courts reduce crime by up to 58 percent. Further, in what the GAO calls the most comprehensive study on drug treatment courts to date, the Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice Multi-Site Adult Drug Court Evaluation (MADCE) confirmed drug treatment courts significantly reduce both drug use and crime and found cost savings averaging \$6,000 for every individual served. The MADCE further found drug treatment courts improve education, employment, housing, and financial stability for nearly all participants. They are proven to promote family reunification, reduce foster care placements, and increase the rate of addicted mothers delivering babies who are fully drug-free.

As the number of criminal defendants entering drug treatment programs continues to grow, the need for substance use treatment and other services increases as well. We are presently unable to meet that need through the state and local funding alone. As the nation continues to fight its way through an opioid epidemic and a growing rate of addiction to stimulants, the substance use treatment and other services provided through drug treatment courts are vital to protecting public safety and public health.

I strongly urge this committee to provide level funding of \$70 million to the Drug Treatment Court Program so people like Mateo and the 1.5 million others served by drug treatment courts in the last 30 years don't slip through the cracks of our justice system, and judges continue to have options other than ineffective incarceration.