

Talking Points – Treatment for Drug Possession Arrestees

Offenders need treatment.

- In 2002, about 87% of state prisoners needed substance abuse services.
- Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to grow up and struggle with their own substance abuse issues and become incarcerated as adults for drug-related crimes.
- By incarcerating mothers struggling with substance abuse, New Mexico leaves behind hundreds of children. For example, the 600 women incarcerated in the NM Women's Correctional Facility collectively leave behind 1800 dependent children under the age of 18.

This legislation will make our communities safer.

- The majority of people in New Mexico and nationally support a shift away from incarceration and towards treatment for non-violent drug offenders.
- This bill proposes supervised probation and appropriate community-based treatment, instead of incarceration, for first- and second-time non-violent drug possession offenders.
- Nonviolent drug offenders need help, not jail. Offering treatment instead of incarceration would enhance public safety by reducing drug-related crime and preserving jail and prison space for violent offenders.
- Individuals struggling from substance use, abuse or dependence would receive the appropriate community-based treatment services they need and learn how to deal with their addictions.

We need to break the cycle of addiction.

- Rather than sending individuals to prison to learn more dangerous crimes and not receive the appropriate treatment, this legislation will help get the root of the problem – substance use, abuse, or dependence.
- Treatment instead of incarceration will help people who are caught up in the criminal justice system because of their drug addiction and get them the appropriate treatment services.
- People who receive appropriate treatment services are more likely to become productive members of their families and society instead of committing future crimes.

Treatment will not be more expensive.

- The cost of probation and treatment is much less than the cost of incarceration. It costs \$30,000 to incarcerate someone for one year and approximately \$5,000 a year to provide someone with substance abuse treatment.
- For each person who receives treatment instead of incarceration, New Mexico could save between \$22,000 and \$27,000 per year.
- A study by the RAND Corporation found that every additional dollar invested in substance abuse treatment saves taxpayers \$7.46 in societal costs (crime, violence, loss of productivity, etc.).

Where will people get treatment?

- The bill calls on the Department of Health to create a plan to fill gaps in the treatment system.
- A proposal to have Medicaid cover substance abuse treatment will increase capacity.
- The Governor has pledged to triple substance abuse treatment in New Mexico.