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SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

October 23, 2026

Hon. Lawrence Dupre
Legislator, District 1
Chairman, Health and Human Services Committee
92 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Opioid Settlement Funding Availability

Legislator Dupre:

I am writing in support of Legislator Lorigo's request for a discussion regarding the County's allocation of opioid settlement funds at an upcoming Health and Human Services Committee meeting. As you know, the Erie County Sheriff's Office receives some of this money to offset the costs of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program at the Erie County Holding Center and Erie County Correctional Facility, but not enough to fully offset those costs. Given that it must be spent on opioid abatement initiatives, it is reasonable to request that the fund cover 100% of our MAT pharmaceutical costs.

Between 2023 and 2025, settlement funds committed by the Erie County Department of Health to the Erie County Sheriff's Office averaged $150,000 per year. Over those same three years, our MAT pharmaceutical costs averaged $693,485, a difference of $543,485. We were pleased that the allocation increased in 2026, initially to $294,870 before an additional $200,000 was committed in August.[1] While this is certainly a large increase from our 2023-2025 average, it still falls well short of our total MAT pharmaceutical expenditures. Importantly, it should be noted that 100% of the opioid settlement funds we receive go directly toward MAT medications for incarcerated patients. We do not use any of the funding to offset administrative costs. Every single dollar we request is exclusively focused on ensuring that the patients have access to the medications necessary to support their treatment and recovery.

We project that the Erie County Sheriff's Office will spend approximately $900,000 on medications for this program in 2026. I want to be absolutely clear. The MAT program is an important initiative and a useful tool for rehabilitating incarcerated individuals. It provides a critical, evidence-based service that supports recovery, reduces the risk of relapse and overdose, and helps participants achieve long-term stability. This program is one of the main reasons our recidivism statistics have decreased in recent years. Yet the fact remains that this is a state-

[1] We were separately awarded $75,000 this month from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to supplement our MAT funding and programming.

mandated program and the costs related to it will only continue to increase. I do not believe that county taxpayers should have to pay for such a state-mandated program when there is more than enough opioid settlement funding available to be directed toward the initiative.

If our projections for the remainder of the year are on target, MAT pharmaceutical costs will increase by 10% in 2026. That's on top of an 18% increase in 2025. There are two reasons these costs are increasing. One is inflationary. Costs would generally be expected to rise year over year. However, costs in 2026 are also increasing because we have more incarcerated individuals enrolled in the MAT Program than ever before, as shown in the chart below.

MAT Program Enrollees at the Erie County Holding Center and Erie County Correctional Facility

2021	514
2022	598
2023	725
2024	1,127
2025	1,015
2026 (Jan. 1 – Aug. 30)	832

As you can see, through two-thirds of 2026, we are on pace to surpass our annual high for participation.

As noted in Legislator Lorigo's letter, the most recent information on the Department of Health's website indicates just 21% of the available opioid settlement funding has been spent. While I recognize a large portion of the remaining funding has been committed but not spent, I believe further discussion on the County's use of these funds is appropriate. If additional funding is available to be allocated to the Erie County Sheriff's Office, I'd strongly advocate for that. While there are several useful and appropriate ways to allocate and spend this money, those most directly impacted by the opioid crisis – including some of the individuals incarcerated at the Erie County Holding Center and Erie County Correctional Facility – deserve a transparent accounting of the funds.

Very Truly Yours,

John C. Garcia
Sheriff of Erie County

cc: Legislator Lindsay Lorigo, District 10
Commissioner Gale Burstein, Department of Health
Director Sara Coffey, Correctional Health Division