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**For Immediate Release**

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**TREATMENT NOT JAIL COALITION WELCOMES COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR  
LEGISLATION TO END THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS AND  
MENTAL ILLNESS**

***S.1976A moves to Senate Codes Committee***

**NEW YORK, NY** – Today, the Treatment Not Jail Coalition welcomed the State Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorders' vote to advance the Treatment Not Jail Act ([S.1976A](#)).

This important vote comes on the heels of a historic \$1 billion investment in our state's mental health infrastructure announced in this year's budget. The Treatment Not Jail Act would create more legal avenues for justice-involved individuals with substance use and mental health issues to be connected with these community-based services. An overwhelming proportion of New York's carceral system suffer from underlying substance use and mental health issues, yet few receive meaningful treatment while being housed in our understaffed and inherently traumatizing prisons and jails. The proposed legislation creates legal opportunities for community based care by expanding access to existing treatment courts, which are proven to [cut rearrest rates in half](#), while [growing employment rates](#) and [saving the state money](#).

Today's Senate committee vote took place in the wake of the passage of a New York City Council resolution calling on the state to pass the Treatment Not Jail Act last week.

"Treatment Not Jail is rational and compassionate legislation, and the fact that it is moving through the legislature is evidence of that. We cannot continue to cycle people through our jail system and expect it to yield different results. I'm hopeful we can keep this momentum going and push for full passage of this life-saving bill before the session ends," said **State Senator Jessica Ramos**.

"The issue of mass incarceration, as well as substance use and mental illness, is an especially pressing issue and New Yorkers are crying out for their elected leaders to take action," said **Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest**, who is the prime sponsor of the Treatment Not Jail Act in the Assembly. "This bill is a common sense measure which will provide individuals with the support that they need, improve public safety, and build stronger and more resilient communities. The legislature must pass it this year to finally begin to offer New Yorkers the solutions they are asking for."

“Today, our elected leaders took an important step in ending New York’s reliance on the criminal legal system to criminalize, incarcerate and, ultimately, warehouse those who suffer from substance use and mental health issues,” said **Stan Germán, executive director of New York County Defender Services**. “By voting the Treatment Not Jail Act out of the Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorders Committee, the New York State Senate has shown a commitment to making our communities healthier, more humane, and safer.”

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