

The Greater Harlem Coalition (GHC) is a grassroots alliance of 6,000 neighbors from more than 85 Harlem and East Harlem organizations, including block associations, small businesses, faith-based organizations, and community groups. We have united to support the safety and wellbeing of all Harlem and East Harlem residents through public action, policy advocacy, and community initiatives.

GHC is raising awareness and demanding government and private treatment providers deliver substance rehabilitation, mental health, and homeless services in small settings in **all** New York communities. The GHC also demands a substantial reduction in the density and capacity of addiction programs in our oversaturated community. Currently, the disproportionate density of programs in Harlem undermines patient success rates and draws illegal drug dealers to our streets. Because of this, the day-to-day life of the residents of Harlem and East Harlem has deteriorated to levels that no New Yorker should have to tolerate. As the home of many brave first responders and essential workers, we say enough is enough.

We are tired of running the gauntlet of drug dealers and drug users every single day to take our kids to school, grab the subway, support a local business, buy groceries, or just try to get some outdoor exercise during these dark pandemic days.

Ultimately this gauntlet of addiction that we must navigate through every time we step out of our homes, comes down to one simple issue: for decades, New York State (under the auspices of the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services - OASAS) has been oversaturating our community with the addiction programs that other wealthier and frequently whiter communities have successfully kept out of their neighborhoods.

I suspect there isn't a person here that doesn't know the phrase "structural racism" by now. In our case, structural racism is glaringly evident in the large methadone programs that are packed in our community in sizes that bear no relationship to our population, our drug related death rate, or even our community's addiction rate. Our storied, proud Black community is used by OASAS to serve addicts from posh neighborhoods who commute to West 124th Street or East 125th Street to anonymously get their treatment outside of their community.

If the men and women struggling with addiction got their treatment and simply hopped on the train to return to the neighborhoods where they live, we would be ok with that. But the problem is, the hyper oversaturation of addiction programs in a small geographic area, attracts and reinforces a street drug culture. Not only does "maybe hanging out a bit after treatment and partying" become normative behavior, but it also fundamentally weakens the effectiveness of the treatment programs you agree to fund, wasting taxpayers' dollars on failure after failure. This makes me wonder, "how do you measure success"?

The decades-long practice of tightly packing methadone programs in Harlem and East Harlem attracts patients (of course) and these vulnerable men and women, in turn, attract the dealers that residents must meander through to get their children to school. These dealers feed off tempting the men and women seeking treatment. They thrive on the density that OASAS - who you fund - has created. A density of hundreds of vulnerable men and women commuting to our streets because OASAS has not equitably distributed opioid treatment programs but has instead chosen to pack them in Black and Brown communities. The dealers profit off OASAS's decisions while they cynically turn users off the road to recovery and instead push them to reenter the world of addiction.

Oversaturation is killing the business community in Harlem and East Harlem.

Oversaturation is degrading the quality of life for all Harlem and East Harlem residents who call this fabled neighborhood home.

Oversaturation does not lead to recovery.

Quite simply, the oversaturation that OASAS has fostered for decades is applauded by dealers. OASAS packs the dealer's client base into compact areas - increasing their ability to profit and ultimately, their ability to kill.

We, the besieged residents of Harlem and East Harlem ask you to use your power to force OASAS to reduce the density of Opioid Treatment Programs in Harlem and East Harlem. We are asking you to end the structural racism that confronts us every time we leave our homes.

OASAS built this. We are asking you to end it!

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[Greater Harlem Coalition – Quality of Life, Advocacy, & Social Justice](#)

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