

Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government

Outside Witness Testimony  
Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations

**Statement of Margaret “Meg” Kaiser  
Prevention Associate, Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy**

On behalf of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals  
June 23, 2023

Chairman Van Hollen, Ranking Member Hyde-Smith, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am Meg Kaiser, prevention associate with the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy in Maryland. I am honored to have the opportunity to submit my testimony on behalf of 40,000 treatment court professionals working in adult drug courts, family treatment courts, juvenile drug treatment courts, tribal healing to wellness courts, impaired-driving courts, and veterans treatment courts. **I am requesting Congress provide level funding of \$3 million to the authorized Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program (Pub. L. 115-271) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy for fiscal year 2023.**

Across the country and in my home state of Maryland, treatment courts are on the front lines of saving lives, reuniting families, cutting crime, and saving money. They unite public health and public safety to transform the justice system’s response to substance use and mental health disorders by offering an evidence-based alternative to incarceration that combines individualized, evidence-based treatment with accountability. Continued education and training for the multidisciplinary court team (which includes the judge, treatment providers, defense, prosecution, law enforcement, community supervision, and others) is vital to ensuring fidelity to the successful treatment court model. In fact, research shows treatment courts whose teams participate in training see a 55% reduction in recidivism among program graduates.

I know firsthand the importance of training and technical assistance (TTA) for treatment courts. Prior to becoming a prevention associate, I served as drug court case manager. In my current role, I work closely with the Harford County Drug Court and see how training and technical assistance (TTA) at the local and national level pays off in ensuring fidelity to the treatment court model. Our participants come from different backgrounds and face unique barriers to recovery when they enter the program. From incentives and sanctions to medication for addiction treatment and so many other relevant topics, training is fundamental to enabling the court team to effectively serve the unique needs of program participants.

I not only attest to the importance of TTA in my professional capacity but also in my personal capacity. In 2018, I graduated from the Harford County Drug Court. I had casually and sporadically used substances in college but spiraled into heavy substance use in 2012 after I was sexually assaulted. I became dependent on opiates as I self-medicated my trauma, and my life unraveled. I was dismissed from the University of Maryland right before my senior year, and I began stealing to support my addiction. For a long time, I managed to conceal the trauma of my

sexual assault and my substance use disorder from my family, but eventually I could not hide my struggle. While in treatment, I resumed use after receiving news that a dear friend had overdosed. I don't like to think about where my downward trajectory could have landed me. Had my parents not turned me in, and the drug court program not accepted me, I'm confident I wouldn't be here today.

I'm grateful every day for the redirection my life took once I got into drug court. The treatment, supervision, coaching, and recovery support from the multidisciplinary treatment court team helped turn my life around. The court team was highly functional and well trained. They worked together seamlessly to respond to every bump in the road and ensure I had the tools I needed to find and sustain recovery. The treatment providers developed an individualized treatment plan for me that included medication for opioid use disorder to help stabilize me in early recovery. More than three years after graduating, I'm in long-term recovery without medication, and I'm once again a proud daughter, sister, friend, taxpayer, and employee. I have dedicated my career to helping people turn their lives around and stay in recovery.

Now more than ever, TTA are needed to educate treatment courts on critical issues such as medication for addiction treatment, overdose prevention, and equity and inclusion. Understanding and implementing best practices improves service delivery and outcomes and helps treatment courts address the most pressing issues facing our justice system.

I am one of 1.5 million people who have found long-term recovery through treatment courts. Supporting TTA for treatment courts is critical to ensuring these programs continue providing quality, evidence-based care to participants struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. I encourage this committee to provide level funding of \$3 million for the Drug Court Training and Technical Assistance Program at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.