



December 8, 2025

Governor Bill Lee
1st Floor, State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee,

The Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug and other Addiction Services (TAADAS) would like to express support for the budget proposal presented on November 10, 2025, by Commissioner Marie Williams of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. TAADAS is a statewide association of treatment, prevention and recovery organizations working to support access to services, education on addiction issues and advocacy. Commissioner Williams' proposed budget will ensure that the non-profit community will be able to serve Tennesseans in need of treatment for substance use disorder for many years to come. We appreciate that Commissioner Williams continues to provide the leadership and vision needed to provide access to treatment for uninsured Tennesseans.

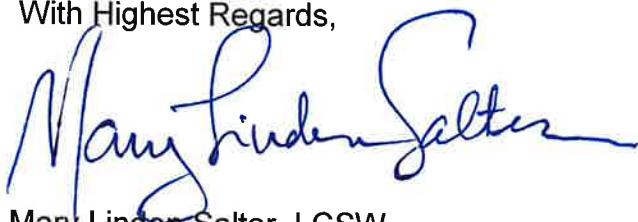
The Commissioner's Fiscal Year 2026-27 request for \$14,550,100 to support substance use treatment access is needed to continue to bridge the gap in funding required to serve the approximate 18,000 people a year that are in need of addiction services. This gap is increasing with shifts in Federal funding. Each year state funding provides treatment to 12–13,000 people who are uninsured or underinsured. TAADAS would appreciate your support for this request in your budget proposal to the Tennessee General Assembly as we continue to address the impact of substance use, including overdose risk and death. In 2023, there were 3,985 overdose deaths, which is more than that attributed to motor vehicle accidents and homicides combined. Providing treatment in response to a recent overdose can help people find hope and invest in their recovery in a time of crisis.

TAADAS is also one of the two entities funded by TDMHSAS to provide the Pathways Behavioral Health Scholarship. We have a significant shortage of behavioral health professionals at a time when overdose and resulting death rates continue at epidemic levels in our state. This scholarship will help us build the workforce needed to provide substance use and mental health services. Commissioner Williams' request for \$1,775,100 to fund the Pathways Behavioral Health Scholarship is in response to the overwhelming amount of requests for support from master's program students preparing to serve persons in state funded addiction programs. Each time we've opened the application portal the response has been overwhelming. We regularly get inquiries about the scholarship when it is closed as well. The additional funding will support the careers of many more future clinicians.

Tennessee has made substantial positive progress providers in addressing the overdose crisis as provisional data from the Tennessee Department of Health shows a 31% decrease in overdose deaths in 2024. We know that treatment works and that additional investment will contribute to improve our positive outcomes and provide additional cost savings for our state. For example, Kaiser Permanente in 2010 analyzed the average medical costs during 18 months pre and post SU treatment and found that the SU treatment group had a 35% reduction in inpatient cost, 39% reduction in ER cost, and a 26% reduction in total medical cost, compared with a matched control group. Investing in addiction treatment and recovery also reduces the costs of incarceration, family interventions and sustenance support.

The attention that you have given to our state's number one public health challenge has been amazing and we are grateful. We stand ready to offer additional data and examples of the impact of state funded treatment services and the scholarship as proposed by TDMHSAS. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or context to illustrate the potential impact.

With Highest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Linden Salter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Mary" on the top line and "Linden Salter" stacked below it.

Mary Linden Salter, LCSW
Executive Director

c.c. Lt. Governor Randy McNally
Speaker of the House Cameron Sexton
Senate Finance Ways & Means Chair Bo Watson
House Finance Ways & Means Chair Gary Hicks
Jim Bryson, Commissioner of Finance and Administration
Marie Williams, Commissioner of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services