

2023 Candidate Survey - New Jersey Assembly and Senate

Behavioral Health Disorders Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery

I. General Views on Alcohol and Drug Disorders Policies to Address Stigma

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Substance use disorders are chronic conditions, much like diabetes or hypertension. Yet the stigma associated with them continues to persist and often prevents people from seeking and receiving the treatment and services they need, contributing to the severity of the disorder and adding huge costs to public programs.

Indicate which principles (if any) you agree with regarding your general views of substance use disorder and recovery policies to address behavioral health issues by placing a check mark next to the letter(s) that correspond with your opinions.

- a) Substance use disorders are preventable, treatable, chronic medical conditions and are as diagnosable/treatable as diabetes, asthma and hypertension.
- b) Substance use disorder is a matter of will. Government assistance is warranted, but ultimately, recovery is dependent on the individual's choices.
- c) I would support sufficient funding to ensure that high-quality treatment and recovery services are available to those who need them.
- d) The criminal code (Title 2C) should be examined to identify and rethink stigmatizing and ineffective drug policies.
- Other: _____

II. NJ Policy Perspective and the NJ Harm Reduction Coalition released a report recommending the elimination of criminal penalties for personal possession/use and sales of all drugs. Which best represents your view? *

- a) I would support the decriminalization of possession of drugs for personal use and sales.
- b) I would support the decriminalization of possession of drugs for personal use, but not sales.
- c) I do not support the decriminalization of personal possession/use or sales of drugs.
- d) Undecided, would like to learn more.

Other:

I support decriminalization of personal use and sales with limitations, but only as part of a broader initiative that also includes other measures such as expanded treatment options for those struggling with substance abuse, harm reduction measures, and community-based support programs to reintegrate and support individuals affected by drug misuse. Additionally, I would want to see educational campaigns that inform the public about the risks and realities of drug use in place as well as tax mechanisms that pay for these initiatives. Decriminalizing alone without these supportive structures in my view would not provide the needed comprehensive approach to ensure public health, safety, and well-being.

III. I would support the following initiatives if they are demonstrated to facilitate and improve access to recovery for individuals with substance use disorder:

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- a) Continued criminal record expungement reform.
- b) Tax credits for employers who hire people in recovery.
- c) Enhanced financial aid and program assistance to communities disparately impacted by the War on Drugs.
- d) Reduction of court-ordered fees and fines for individuals who successfully complete a treatment or diversion program.
- e) Investment in community-based outreach teams.
- f) Housing First programs with a harm reduction philosophy for those with substance use disorder
- g) Expanded use of peer recovery support services.
- Other:

IV. Drug overdoses continue to be a major public health concern. New Jersey has implemented life-saving programs to ensure access to naloxone, syringe exchange, and harm reduction centers. I would support adequate government funding to expand the accessibility and use of harm reduction practices. Check all that apply:

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- a) Mobile vans for safe supply distribution
- b) Expansion of Medication for Opioid Use Disorder programs in high-need areas
- c) Vending machines for harm reduction supplies
- d) Overdose Prevention Centers
- e) Drop-In Centers equipped with showers, meals, and social services
- f) All drug testing supplies (i.e xylazine test strips, etc.)
- Other: _____

Legislative Priorities

V. In seventy-five (75) words or less, please explain any other legislative priorities you will have regarding the prevention, treatment of and recovery from addictive illnesses if elected.

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If elected, I'll champion a progressive approach towards addictive illnesses, prioritizing prevention, treatment, and recovery. This includes expanding access to evidence-based treatment, increasing funding for mental health services, and promoting educational campaigns on addiction risks. Additionally, I'll advocate for harm reduction strategies, ensuring those battling addiction receive compassionate care rather than criminal penalties. Through collaboration and a holistic focus, we can address the root causes and societal impacts of addiction.

CANDIDATE MUST SIGN TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY

Candidate Name: *

Gabriel Franco

Email Address: *

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Candidate Signature: *

Gabriel B Franco

District: *

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Party: *

Democrat

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