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What They Are Saying ... Governor Christie's Drug Treatment Program for Non-Violent Offenders is "Revolutionary", "Wise", "Heartfelt" and "Long Overdue"

Thursday, March 1, 2012 •

NJ Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies CEO Debra L. Wentz: "Christie's initiative is right on time to strengthen New Jersey and address a widespread health issue." (Debra L. Wentz, "Gov. Chris Christie's drug treatment plan good for jailed people, N.J.," Star-Ledger, 1/29/12)

Wentz: "Christie's revolutionary policy will pave the way for fiscal relief by slashing in half the money spent incarcerating thousands of nonviolent offenders and by saving millions of corrections dollars." (Debra L. Wentz, "Gov. Chris Christie's Drug Treatment Plan Good For Jailed People, N.J.," Star-Ledger, 1/29/12)

Wentz: "We call on our state's leaders to join together in a unique opportunity to save lives, save money and save New Jersey." (Debra L. Wentz, "Gov. Chris Christie's Drug Treatment Plan Good For Jailed People, N.J.," Star-Ledger, 1/29/12)

Sherry Sandler, New Jersey State Parole Board: "The New Jersey State Parole Board 'fully supports the governor's proposal ...'" (Kevin Riordan, "Christie's Comment On Treating Drug Abuse Stirs Hope," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/12/2012)

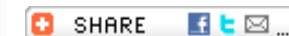
Sandler: "We've always had the position that treatment works. And New Jersey's success in reducing the prison population is partially related to our use of treatment." (Kevin Riordan, "Christie's Comment On Treating Drug Abuse

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Stirs Hope," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/12/2012)

New Jersey Coalition of Community Corrections Providers President Patricia McKernan: "We're hopeful about the governor's proposal ... Expanding treatment options is great..." (Kevin Riordan, "Christie's Comment On Treating Drug Abuse Stirs Hope," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/12/2012)

Cumberland County's Seabrook House Vice President Stephanie Loeb: "The governor gets it..." (Kevin Riordan, "Christie's Comment On Treating Drug Abuse Stirs Hope," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/12/2012)

Loeb: "The social stigma [is] that addiction . . . is an issue of morals, or a lack of intestinal fortitude, or a lack of willpower ... Addiction is a chronic illness." (Kevin Riordan, "Christie's Comment On Treating Drug Abuse Stirs Hope," Philadelphia Inquirer, 2/12/2012)

The Star-Ledger's Tom Moran: "The highlight came after Christie called for a revolution in New Jersey's approach to the drug war that would divert non-violent addicts from prison and put them in treatment programs instead. And he did it with characteristic Christie style, in big bold strokes." (Tom Moran, "Focus On Drug War Overhaul A Bright Spot In Gov. Christie's Address," The Star-Ledger, 1/18/12)

Moran: "This speech, in fact, had a great deal to offer to the state's urban poor. The change in strategy on the drug war is the big one. New Jersey is holding nearly 7,000 non-violent drug offenders in its state prisons today, and countless more in its jails. Over time, this creates an army of convicts, most of them black and Latino, who have criminal records that almost ensure they will be economic cripples for life. That is probably the worst thing New Jersey does to its poor population." (Tom Moran, "Focus On Drug War Overhaul A Bright Spot In Gov. Christie's Address," The Star-Ledger, 1/18/12)

Moran: "If Christie is able to reverse course on this, and if he really funds effective drug treatment programs, he will have done more for New Jersey's poor than Jon Corzine or McGreevey ever did." (Tom Moran, "Focus On Drug War Overhaul A Bright Spot In Gov. Christie's Address," The Star-Ledger, 1/18/12)

Moran: "The meat of this speech, the parts we should pay most attention to, were his plans on education and the drug war. And on both counts, he's trying to tackle problems that are condemning the state's poor population to a cycle of poverty." (Tom Moran, "Focus On Drug War Overhaul A Bright Spot In Gov. Christie's Address," The Star-Ledger, 1/18/12)

Philadelphia Inquirer: "Gov. Christie smartly recognizes that addiction is still winning the 40-year-old war on drugs, so he is changing up New Jersey's strategy." (Editorial, "Compassionate Approach To Fighting Drugs In N.J.," Philadelphia Inquirer, 1/31/12)

"His plan expands on an executive order he issued last year to centralize drug crime fighting efforts, with the very

important use of real-time data to determine the effectiveness of programs.” (Editorial, “Compassionate Approach To Fighting Drugs In N.J.,” Philadelphia Inquirer, 1/31/12)

“Pulling drug-crime programs together was a good idea. Making treatment required for all nonviolent offenders is an even better one. Hopefully, Christie can use his influence with governors in other states to get them to adopt this wise and heartfelt strategy.” (Editorial, “Compassionate Approach To Fighting Drugs In N.J.,” Philadelphia Inquirer, 1/31/12)

Press of Atlantic City: “Prison doesn't help drug addicts. Treatment does. Everyone knows that. Treatment is also cheaper than incarcerating drug addicts. ... [G]ov. Chris Christie, to his credit, says he wants to change that.” (Editorial, “Christie And Drug Treatment / A Major step,” Press of Atlantic City, 1/23/12)

“In his State of the State speech last week, the governor called for ‘mandatory treatment for every nonviolent offender in New Jersey, not just a select few.’ ... That's a revolutionary - and long overdue - proposal. (Editorial, “Christie And Drug Treatment / A Major step,” Press of Atlantic City, 1/23/12)

“[I]t would be the most sensible step New Jersey has ever taken in the effort to fight drug abuse and break that cycle of addiction, crime and poverty.” (Editorial, “Christie And Drug Treatment / A Major step,” Press of Atlantic City, 1/23/12)

Times of Trenton: “Anyone with even a glancing knowledge of Gov. Chris Christie knows that he is tough. Tough on spending, tough on teachers unions, tough on Democrats — especially tough on crime. Last week, through, a silver lining of compassion glinted through that steely resolve as he presented his vision of tough love for New Jersey's most hapless criminals.” (Editorial, “Gov. Chris Christie's Plan To Transform Treatment Of Non-Violent Drug Offenders Deserves Praise,” Times of Trenton, 1/22/12)

“The governor wants nonviolent offenders with drug abuse problems to be treated for their addictions instead of the far too likely outcome of permanent residence in jail. ... It's a transformation long sought by Democratic lawmakers. But their efforts to bring about that change have stalled or misfired.” (Editorial, “Gov. Chris Christie's Plan To Transform Treatment Of Non-Violent Drug Offenders Deserves Praise,” Times of Trenton, 1/22/12)

As a former prosecutor, and the state's most powerful politician, the governor is not embracing softhearted tactics or bowing to opinion polls. He is embarking on the most enlightened — and practical — approach to dealing with the plague of addiction and its statewide consequences. ... We commend his compassion.” (Editorial, “Gov. Chris Christie's Plan To Transform Treatment Of Non-Violent Drug Offenders Deserves Praise,” Times of Trenton, 1/22/12)

Former New Jersey NAACP Political Director Walter Fields: “With drug courts, we can reduce the number of crime victims, alleviate human suffering and save taxpayer dollars. That's what I call being tough — and smart — on crime.” (Walter Fields, “With Drug Courts, N.J. Could Be Tough And Smart On Crime,” The Star-Ledger, 2/1/2012)

“We should treat, rather than incarcerate, nonviolent drug offenders. That’s the straightforward policy behind so-called drug courts.” (Walter Fields, “With Drug Courts, N.J. Could Be Tough And Smart On Crime,” The Star-Ledger, 2/1/2012)

“For his part, Gov. Chris Christie proposes to take a good idea and make it better by expanding the number of drug court participants and making enrollment mandatory, not merely voluntary.” (Walter Fields, “With Drug Courts, N.J. Could Be Tough And Smart On Crime,” The Star-Ledger, 2/1/2012)

“By almost any measure, drug courts make sense. ...Thus, if we treat the root causes of drug-related crimes — substance abuse and addiction — we can reduce the likelihood of crimes being committed in the first instance.” (Walter Fields, “With Drug Courts, N.J. Could Be Tough And Smart On Crime,” The Star-Ledger, 2/1/2012)

NJ Spotlight: “Christie -- by proclaiming that drug addicts are people who deserve a ‘second chance’ -- has opened the door to a rational and compassionate discussion of our draconian drug laws. Let’s walk through it and find what’s on the other side.” (R. William Potter, “Opinion: Christie’s Call For Compassion, A Good First Step,” NJ Spotlight, 1/31/12)

Among the big surprises in Gov. Chris Christie’s State of the State speech was his call to ‘reclaim the lives of drug offenders’ through expanded use of ‘drug courts’ mandating treatment programs for nonviolent offenders in place of imposing jail time.” (R. William Potter, “Opinion: Christie’s Call For Compassion, A Good First Step,” NJ Spotlight, 1/31/12)

“These sentiments, as powerful as they are unexpected coming from this law-and-order leader, are reminiscent of Nixon going to China.” (R. William Potter, “Opinion: Christie’s Call For Compassion, A Good First Step,” NJ Spotlight, 1/31/12)

“[W]ho better than a former federal prosecutor to lead the way in a paradigm shift from three-plus decades of zero tolerance lock-'em-up policies toward drug offenders that have failed miserably -- at incalculable cost to society, especially lower-income black and Hispanic communities where law enforcement is concentrated?” (R. William Potter, “Opinion: Christie’s Call For Compassion, A Good First Step,” NJ Spotlight, 1/31/12)

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