

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Use. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Select Committee. My name is Ivonne Tapia and I serve as Aliviane's Chief Executive Officer. Aliviane is a nonprofit behavioral health organization based in El Paso and serving West Texas counties for the past 48 years. Aliviane exists to help people recover from addiction through a holistic approach of behavioral health that includes prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services.

I am also the incoming Chair for the Association of Substance Abuse Programs in Texas. This statewide association represents over 60 organizations and provides a coordinated leadership to ensure Texans have full access to prevention and treatment substance abuse services.

For almost fifty years, Aliviane has been a prominent leader in substance use and mental health co-occurring disorder services and a respected client advocate. Our services include outreach, education, prevention, intervention, treatment for substance use and co-occurring disorders, medication assisted treatment, pregnant/post-partum intervention, testing for infectious diseases, HIV services, recovery support services, parenting classes, youth counseling, case management, and community awareness projects. Our success lies in putting our clients first, surrounding our clients with as many resources as possible, and working with other community organizations because not one entity can do it alone. In the interest of time, I am going to highlight some of the most pressing issues in our community:

- Drug trends in West Texas
 - While the opioid crisis is capturing headlines, in West Texas, Methamphetamine use is dangerously rising.
- Access to services
 - *Uninsured Population.*
 - According to the Texas Medical Association 29.7% of the total population in El Paso County is uninsured. Across Texas, anywhere from fifty to eighty percent of residents in the border towns do not have any health insurance. This situation affects their interest in receiving any kind of treatment due to the high costs associated with this service.
 - *Lack of Transportation.*
 - El Paso County is over 1,000 square miles. Our treatment services cover a wide area, including all the 329 registered colonias in the county, which are low-income communities lacking some of the most basic living necessities. Public transportation in the colonias is virtually non-existent making it almost impossible for clients to access treatment services and other resources. We also provide direct services to both Hudspeth and Culberson counties, located as far as 160 miles from El Paso. Many times providers in El Paso are their only hope.
- Service Capacity
 - *Lack of residential services for men in West Texas.*
 - After 25 years of operating a male residential treatment center, Aliviane had to close its doors due to the impossible financial task of keeping it open.

- *Shortage of detox beds.*
 - El Paso's Trinity Recovery Center is only funded for eight detox beds per month.
 - The lack of capacity is very concerning, since according to our own research from 2012 to 2016, the number of drug overdoses in El Paso County has gone from 61 to 103.
- *Recovery Support services for all populations.*
 - As we continue to expand recovery support services in Texas, it is critical for the recovery community to be included in the decision making process.
- *Prevention and Intervention services are an integral part of recovery*
 - Prevention and intervention services save lives, save dollars, and improve the overall health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. For example, our Pregnant/Post-Partum Intervention program enrolled 24 eighteen and nineteen year olds who are at risk for substance use disorders in the month of March; a 20% increase from last year.

Addiction – in its totality - is an epidemic. Single drug solutions limit our ability to respond to regional needs. Aliviane and the Association of Substance Abuse Programs are ready to continue to work with you and the State to increase availability and access to treatment. I urge you to investment in community-based organizations that have the passion, the expertise, and the experience to ensure that prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery services are available to more Texans.

Again thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee. I am happy to address any questions you may have.