

NISKANEN C E N T E R

CO-SPONSOR THE SOBER ACT, H.R. 8209

The High Cost of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

A [recent](#) report found that crimes attributable to alcohol and drugs cost the United States more than \$120 billion annually. Substance abuse threatens public safety and leads to [increased incarceration](#). [More than one in five](#) state prisoners met the criteria for alcohol use disorder in the year prior to prison admission, while one in four federal prisoners and nearly one in three state prisoners reported drinking alcohol at the time of their offense.

The “[24-7 sobriety](#)” program has been shown to reduce crime and incarceration related to substance abuse. The program couples diligent supervision with consistent but fair sanctions. It allows participants the opportunity to live their lives largely uninterrupted, but sets clear guardrails around their behavior. Participants must stop drinking and using drugs, and in exchange are allowed to remain in the community, keep their jobs and driver’s licenses, and work toward long-term sobriety. Expanding 24-7 sobriety programs is an evidence-based, cost effective way to reduce alcohol and drug related crime and violence, and simultaneously reduce the prison population.

Investing in Responsibility and Public Safety

The Supporting Opportunities to Build Everyday Responsibility (SOBER) Act would authorize \$250 million - \$50 million in appropriations each year for five years - to fund grants that would:

- Sustain and expand existing 24-7 sobriety programs;
- Help states and local governments create new 24-7 sobriety programs; and
- Evaluate and assess the impact of 24-7 sobriety on crime, recidivism, and incarceration.

The total annual appropriation authorized under this legislation represents less than 0.04 percent of the estimated annual cost of alcohol-attributable crime. In South Dakota, a \$400,000 investment in a state-wide 24-7 sobriety program led to at least [\\$28 million in savings](#). **This translates to \$70 saved for every \$1 spent.**

The SOBER Act is endorsed by the National Sheriffs Association and the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

To co-sponsor the SOBER Act, contact Elizabeth Lloyd at Elizabeth.Lloyd@mail.house.gov