FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: January 15, 2026
CONTACTS: Alvaro Perpuly <alvaro@newdealstrategies.com> 305-986-7001, Mariah McGough <mariah@vocal-ny.org> 203-470-9979

AMIDST UNCERTAINTY OVER FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH, OVER 230 ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR EVIDENCE-BASED USE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS IN 2026

New National Roadmap Offers Guidance to Reduce Overdose Deaths and Support Impacted Communities

PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

WASHINGTON, DC — Tuesday, the Trump administration terminated nearly $2 Billion in federal grants for mental health services, housing supports, and overdose prevention before reversing the decision Wednesday evening. This comes as the administration continues to expand its punitive War on Drugs policies both at home and abroad. Today, amidst this funding uncertainty, **more than 230 organizations from 40 states and Washington DC are jointly releasing A National Roadmap for Spending Opioid Settlement Funds in 2026: Supporting Communities & Ending the Overdose Crisis**–a critical guide for state and local governments on allocating over $57 billion in funds from opioid manufacturer and distributor settlements. **The Roadmap also includes timely guidance for decision makers considering using opioid settlement funds to fill gaps left by current or future federal cuts**.

As this administration continues to dismantle public health services, it's more crucial now than ever before that states spend opioid settlement funds responsibly. The Roadmap provides evidence-based recommendations for how these funds can be used to save lives, support communities, and repair the devastating harms caused by decades of the War on Drugs. It emphasizes investment in proven public health solutions rather than punitive, ineffective approaches, and calls for transparency, accountability, and inclusion of people directly impacted by the overdose crisis in funding decisions. An appendix details examples of good and problematic spending from the past year.

Key recommendations include:

- **Reject Funding Systems and Policies that Advance the Drug War:** Do not further criminalization or bolster the criminal legal system, family separation, dangerous "treatment" approaches, unproven prevention programs, or corporate money-grabs masquerading as harm reduction.

- **Provide Full Access to Public Health and Harm Reduction Programs:** Support for syringe service programs, naloxone access, overdose prevention centers, HIV and hepatitis prevention and treatment, and low-barrier access to medications for opioid use disorder.

- **Fund Housing and Supportive Services:** Expand housing, outreach, and wraparound support services for individuals affected by drug use and related convictions, ensuring they do not face barriers to essential services. Institute community-based crisis response teams that can respond to emergency calls related to drug use and mental health needs.

- **Repair Racial and Economic Harms:** Fund programs to address the collateral damage caused by the War on Drugs, including legal aid services, second-chance employment opportunities, recovery-to-work initiatives, and programs to keep families together.

"Opioid settlement funds represent a historic opportunity to finally invest in solutions that work—saving lives, reuniting families, and supporting communities that have borne the brunt of this crisis," said **Vinay Krishman, Fight Back Campaigner with Popular Democracy.** "We urge states and localities to follow this Roadmap to ensure these funds are used effectively, equitably, and transparently."

Implementing the roadmap's recommendations can help shift the trajectory of the overdose crisis and drive real, measurable progress by:

- Significantly reducing the harms associated with drug use

- Supporting pathways that move homeless people who use drugs into stable housing

- Guiding states in managing federal funding cuts while safeguarding settlement dollars

- Reuniting families and strengthening communities.

Since the release of the first edition of this roadmap in 2023, we have seen overdose numbers begin to decline as localities have invested in harm reduction and other proven solutions. However, we also continue to see these critical dollars spent on programs to bolster arrest and incarceration, which only harm our communities. This updated report details the successful and unsuccessful steps states have taken in the past year to keep people safe.

About the Coalition
This Roadmap was spearheaded by **Popular Democracy, Dream.org, the Legal Action Center, the Maine People's Alliance, the Maine Recovery Action Project, Opioid Policy Institute, Salvation and Social Justice, Sea Change RCO & HRC,** and **VOCAL-US** and signed by organizations from across the United States.

###