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Press Release

HOPENETWORKS ANNOUNCES 2003 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Baton Rouge-LA, March 23, 2003: HopeNetworks announces an initiative to create and support four bills in the Louisiana Legislature this legislative season to aid in reducing the harm alcohol/drug abuse and addiction bring Louisiana.

DWI Court -- Similar to our current drug court, but it applies to those driving under the influence of alcohol, currently not mandated to the Louisiana drug courts. It allows both consequences and treatment for those drivers whose screenings determine they are in need. SOURCE: Hopenetworks.org

First Offense DWI Screenings – Proposes all DWI arrestees will receive mandatory screening by a Louisiana Board Certified Substance Abuse Counselor and if needed, will benefit from early intervention programs or receive substance abuse treatment. According to NCADD, one-third of those driving drunk are problem drinkers. Louisiana ranks 2nd in the nation in alcohol related highway fatalities, and more than 400 people lost their lives in alcohol related highways crashes last year alone.

Mandatory 21 --Statewide legislation or local ordinance that would prevent persons 18-20 years of age from entering into bars and lounges where alcohol is the principle commodity sold and can be consumed on the premises. Once inside a bar, drinks are easily passed from adult to youth. And 87 % of voter's statewide support Mandatory 21, 75% thinks it is easy for youth to have access to alcohol once inside a bar, and 71% are concerned that youth are allowed in bars but not allowed to drink SOURCE: THE LOUISIANA POLL, 1998 Alliance to Prevent Underage Drinking

Parity—mandates that healthcare insurance coverage provide insurance coverage for Substance Abuse at the same level as insurance coverage for other chronic disease (Like Diabetes). Only eight percent of those who need treatment find available services in Louisiana. Presently, there are only 32 medical detox beds are available and more than 1000 people await for beds to open. In waiting, most people are employed with no healthcare insurance coverage for Substance Abuse treatment. Louisiana state OAD provides 99% of any available treatment this legislation would reduce the burden on state services, by affording those with health insurance coverage, and allowing those without insurance, to make use of the available state services.

HopeNetworks is a coalition of community advocacy organizations that together, seek to reduce the impact of addiction on Louisiana. According to CASA Louisiana spent more than \$7 Billion in 1998 "cleaning up" the costs of untreated addiction. Treatment and prevention work, federal government estimates show that for every \$1 spent to treat addiction, 7\$ is saved cleaning up

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costs of the social ills communities are burdened with.