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COVID-19 Provides a Path Forward in Fighting the Opioid Crisis

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Mainers are dying from drug overdose in unprecedented numbers. Data from the first half of 2020 show a 27 percent increase in overdose deaths over the last half of 2019, with 82 percent of these deaths involving at least one opioid. Preliminary evidence suggests this increase stems from a combination of factors fueled, in part, by COVID-19: social isolation, disruptions in treatment and recovery programs and an unstable, increasingly dangerous illicit drug supply.

As harrowing as these statistics are, the loss would be greater if not for the recent efforts by a compassionate and dedicated community of service providers, grassroots advocates and policymakers. These adaptations can guide our longer-term drug policy reform efforts.