

June 17, 2022

NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
ATTN: Awards Committee Chair
44 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 301
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear NAADAC Awards Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Dr. H. Westley Clark for consideration for NAADAC's 50th Anniversary Legend Award. Dr. Clark has led an exemplary career and has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to advancing patient rights, advocating for health care equity, and ensuring all Americans have access to treatment.

It's not easy to measure Dr. Clark's work. I could state the number of years he spent treating addiction disorders – 40. I could list the distinguished positions he's held – he was the director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; chief of the Associated Substance Abuse Programs at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center; and associate clinical professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of California at San Francisco, to name a few. I could also list the numerous awards Dr. Clark has received such as AJPH's 2018 Editor's Choice Award for Reviewer of the Year, the 2015 James Ralph Memorial Award for Outstanding Public Service from the Black Psychiatrist of America, a 2013 Friend of the Field Award from AATOD, and many others. But none of these describe the depth of his dedication to making the lives of Americans better.

Dr. Clark is an ambassador for patients and people in recovery. His congressional speech on safeguarding privacy protections gave individuals in treatment and recovery control over who can access their personal information. "No other medical condition evokes the same societal prejudice or sanctions as addiction," he wrote. For Dr. Clark, protecting someone's right to privacy is more than practicing good medicine, it is giving those who are vulnerable a voice. Because of his efforts, people seeking treatment can safely discuss their substance use issues with treatment providers without fear of discrimination. I had the opportunity to serve on the Center for Substance Abuse National Advisory Council while Dr. Clark was the Center Director. During this time the conceptualization of Recovery Support Services was a priority and because of Dr. Clark's leadership many States have adopted the practice and millions are receiving services and lives are being saved.

Furthermore, as the coronavirus swept America, its disproportionate impact on people of color was discussed on television and published in newspapers everywhere. While the country was coming to terms with how unfair America's health care system is, Dr. Clark confronted lawmakers and his peers. In 2021, Dr. Clark publicly called out the systemic racism in America's health care system. "The American Medical Association's blindness to its own institutional racism is a moral stain on our profession. And with every passing year -- every day -- a heavy cost is paid in Black lives," he wrote on CNN. The article was about cannabis prohibition and how it disproportionately impacts

communities of color – since blacks are four times more likely to be arrested for simple cannabis possession than whites – contributing to poverty and inhibiting access to health care.

In addition to his distinguished advocacy work, Dr. Clark is a pioneer. Over twenty years ago, and while he was still at SAMHSA, Dr. Clark realized how powerful the recovery community could be. He had seen the shortfalls of the traditional acute care model and asked what else could be done to better serve his patients? He wanted to know where his patients went after the treatment center closed? Who did they have for support outside office hours?

The answer came to him after observing veterans' groups. Dr. Clark learned that one vet helping another could have a profound effect on someone's recovery and created the Recovery Community Services Project (RCSP). Not only did the program amplify the important voices of people in recovery and their contributions to society, but it also ensured that anyone in America can access recovery support. RCSP may have been created with a "shoestring budget", but its work led to the creation of thousands of recovery community programs across America.

To me, Dr. Clark is a friend and a mentor. To many others he is an extraordinary man with an illustrious career and an even longer list accomplishments. But what makes Dr. Clark a Legend is his ability to see people with substance use issues as human beings. As one interviewer wrote in 2001, "He saw us, he saw our plight and he saw our resiliency and potential and he dedicated his professional life to working on our issues."

Dr. Clark's ingenuity gave us a community. His advocacy gave us a voice. And his perseverance will give us a future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anita Bradley

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