

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

RE: SB 1573- Syringe Service Program Buffer Zone- SUPPORT

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Keri Lopez, in addition to being on staff as a Legislative Aide for Senator Anderson, I am twice elected and currently serving as a Director on the Redmond School Board in Central Oregon. Today, I am writing on behalf of myself, as a mom of school aged children.

On August 19, 2022 Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler extended a ban on homeless camps near high crash corridors to include designated safe walking routes used by school aged children. “Wheeler said the city needs to prioritize the safety of children. Wheeler noted children, specifically those in elementary and middle school, are a vulnerable group that could be harmed by trash and biohazards that are often found near homeless camps. School-age children should be able to walk, bike, and ride buses to get to and from schools without potentially dangerous hazards as a result of encampments, including trash, tents in the right-of-way, biohazards, hypodermic needles, and more,” Wheeler said. (Read the full article here: [Mayor Wheeler bans homeless camps along school walking routes](#))

Because our great State has welcomed open air drug use and harm reduction programs, it's now necessary and imperative to protect our children from unintended exposure to the repercussions of these programs. It is not and should not be considered unreasonable to protect our kids and students, and their fundamental right to safe, clean syringe free routes to and from school and safe, clean syringe free school zones.

I would also like to draw your attention to the myriad of Acts and Bills that define illegal and prohibited activities within specific distances of a school zone: The Gun Free School Zones Act, Drug Free School Zones Act and ORS 475.904, and Oregon Senate Bill 1522 that regulates marijuana retailer or medical marijuana dispensary locations around school zones as well.

Again, I strongly urge your support of SB 1573 to establish buffer zones around Syringe Service Programs, adding them to the list of measures necessary to protect children from potential harm.

Thank you for continuing to prioritize the safety of our kids, our schools and our communities.

Sincerely-

Keri Lopez