

Submitter:

Linda Peng

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Early Childhood and
Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or
Topic:

SB1573

Chair and members of the committee,

I am an addiction medicine physician as well as a parent. I understand why some may believe this bill will protect children by limiting access to syringes. However, this legislation would not make children safer. Instead, it would harm our community by restricting access to life-saving syringe service programs (SSPs).

We have a strong and consistent body of evidence demonstrating that SSPs improve health outcomes for people who use drugs by reducing the transmission of infectious diseases such as hepatitis C and HIV. SSPs also serve as critical points of engagement, connecting individuals to overdose prevention tools like Narcan, peer support, housing resources, and pathways to treatment. These programs save lives and strengthen public health.

This bill's proposed 2,000-foot restriction from any childcare program would, in practice, make it nearly impossible for most SSPs to operate—because childcare programs are nearly everywhere. A restriction this broad does not reflect how SSPs function or the needs of the communities they serve. In many rural areas, mobile syringe service programs are the only available harm-reduction resource. This legislation would effectively eliminate many of these mobile services, cutting off access to essential care for people who are already underserved.

It is also important to clarify a key misconception: the vast majority of people who access syringe service programs do not use drugs at the locations where they receive supplies. Additionally, there is no evidence showing increased harm to children in areas near SSPs.

We should not restrict evidence-based public health interventions that save lives and reduce harm. As a parent, my priority is the health and well-being of my child and our entire community. Healthy communities are the foundation for healthy children. By imposing unnecessary and unscientific restrictions on syringe service programs—restrictions that don't actually protect children—we would be actively undermining public health and harming those most in need.

I want my children to grow up in a community that responds to these public health challenges with compassion, evidence, and care. For these reasons, I urge you to oppose this bill.

Linda Peng, MD