

Submitter: Dane Zahner
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the committee

I am reaching out to you today to oppose SB 1573.

Harm Reduction is healthcare. Harm Reduction/Syringe Exchange sites offer essential services to so many across Oregon. These essential access points for Syringes, Naloxone, and testing are essential in decreasing new HIV, HCV, overdose deaths, as well as skin care issues. This policy will effectively eliminate access to rural Oregon communities and their members struggling with Substance use disorder.

The ability to use other agencies' location, mobile sites has offered many opportunities to all of these essential services in some very rural areas. Harm Reduction is truly meeting people where they reside in some rural and urban areas.

Syringe exchange services offer people more than equipment and testing. It is often a point of contact for connection to treatment, housing, and medical care referrals. This might be the one safe place people go to ask for help. The goal is to help people, and until they are ready to change, it is often challenging to find an agency willing to listen and help support those changes. Syringe exchange mobile and using other locations' facilities have become an essential way to connect with our most vulnerable committee members. Oregon has a huge issue with Hepatitis C infections. The impact here will continue to negatively impact our ranking in America in new infections and deaths, presently rated 3rd worst.

I am truly fearful of the impact on HCV, HIV, overdose deaths, as well as skin tissue issues that will result. They could be costly to our Healthcare systems and the lives of the individual. With syringe waste disposal providing more access points in all restrooms, working with fire departments to sponsor large boxes. These are all better answers for access to dispose of waste. The Syringe Exchange services are a key resource for these issues. Together, we can find better solutions to fix these concerns without effectively eliminating the services.

I ask you to please consider voting no on this bill. Harm Reduction is healthcare, and I hope you think about the potential impact on our rural citizens. Oregon may very well see an increase in HIV, HCV, Skin tissue issues, as well as lost lives to overdose.

Thanks in advance for considering a no vote on SB 1573.

Thanks
Dane Zahner
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