

February 4, 2026

Letter Opposing OR Senate Bill 1573

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

I am an addiction medicine physician at OHSU and assistant professor of Medicine and Psychiatry who cares for people with substance use disorders and serious medical and mental illness across the state of Oregon.

I'm writing to oppose SB 1573. While the bill aims to reduce public drug use, protect the safety of children and our communities, and reduce crime, I am concerned that this bill will have the opposite effect. Syringe service programs are a vital service to people who use drugs. In addition to providing clean needles, many provide risk reduction education, syringe disposal services, and sexually transmitted infection testing. Engagement with these programs can be a gateway for people to connect to treatment for substance use disorders. **Syringe service programs do not increase or encourage drug use.**

While there is often public concern that syringe service programs can lead to an increase of improperly disposed of needles, research has not supported these claims. Prior to opening their first syringe service program in 2016, Miami had significantly higher rates of syringes being disposed of in public spaces compared to San Francisco where these programs were regularly operating [1].

Research on similar laws does not support that they make our communities safer. In 2000, Washington D.C. began restricting the operation of syringe service programs within 1000 feet of elementary or secondary schools. A study of DC Metropolitan Police Department data showed that much of this space overlapped with hot-spots of injection drug use-related crime (drug possession or sale) and prevented access to this much needed service in these high-risk areas [2]. These crime hot-spots persisted with implementation of the 1000-foot restriction. This law limited access to a life-saving service in the areas it was needed most. **I'm writing because I do not want us to make this mistake in Oregon.**

We have much important work to do to make our communities safer, improve the care for people with substance use disorders, and expand access to risk reduction services for all Oregonians. **This bill would make this work harder and would not have the desired effect to improve public safety.**

Please consider my testimony which strongly opposes SB 1573. I hope that we can continue working together to find meaningful solutions to Oregon's addiction challenges.

Sincerely,

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Assistant Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry

Oregon Health & Science University

[1] Tookes HE, Kral AH, Wenger LD, et al. A comparison of syringe disposal practices among injection drug users in a city with versus a city without needle and syringe programs, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 123, Issues 1–3, 2012, Pages 255-259

[2] Allen ST, Ruiz MS, Jones J, Turner MM. Legal space for syringe exchange programs in hot spots of injection drug use-related crime. *Harm Reduct J*. 2016;13:16. Published 2016 Apr 26. doi:10.1186/s12954-016-0104-3