

Opposing SB 1573 2026.

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Sophia Bigg. I am a resident of Portland, a college student studying history, and a future educator.

I strongly oppose Bill 1573. First, I do not believe it addresses the root of its concern. If we are trying to keep children safe from syringes on the street, Bill 1573 is not a logical solution. Several peer reviewed studies have concluded that the presence of Syringe Service Programs decreases the amount of needles on the street,¹ as Syringe Service Programs not only provide methods to dispose of syringes safely [sharps containers], but constantly encourage that very practice to their participants. Further, given the fact that participants often do not have access to reliable transportation, the people who use syringes and live around child care facilities will have a specifically difficult time accessing safe methods for disposal, resulting in more syringes on the street in the exact areas you are trying to reduce it.

Or if you are trying to keep children “safe” from people who use drugs, Bill 1573 is not logical as people who inject drugs aren’t going to move away from your school because there is no syringe service there. I then ask, what unique danger do these people pose? Projecting a fear of people who use drugs is extremely unfounded and not addressed by Bill 1573. Have you considered that people who inject drugs could be parents themselves, trying to stay alive, and healthy, for their beloved children? Have you considered that people who inject drugs are regular people, who, like all of us, have bad days and good days? I would venture to say that a lot of you have not considered this, because a stigma has barred you from interacting with these neighbors of yours.

Lastly, I do not believe Bill 1573 is empowering, nor educationally beneficial for children. Ignoring the realities of the world we live in is not a tenet of education, nor is belittling children’s ability to think critically about the world they live in.

I have witnessed first hand over the last twelve years (middle school, highschool, and college,) friends of mine being confused and endangered by drug use, Specifically due to their lack of awareness of this very real part of life. When you have an opportunity to learn about something, regardless of whether it’s a positive or negative thing, you learn how to navigate it.

I understand you all are scared, but Bill 1573 does not realistically or logically address any of your fears. The last seventy years of history have shown us prohibitive measures against drug use have not worked.

¹ Doherty, M C et al. “The effect of a needle exchange program on numbers of discarded needles: a 2-year follow-up.” *American journal of public health* vol. 90,6 (2000): 936-9. doi:10.2105/ajph.90.6.936; <https://news.med.miami.edu/syringe-exchange-program-successfully-improves-proper-disposal-in-community/>; <https://www.amfar.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/fact-sheet-Syringe-Exchange-031913.pdf>;

Logical solutions could look more like an increased number of garbage cans on the street, and/or additionally could implement sharps containers attached to garbage cans or separately. Another idea I have is the construction of community based clean-up groups, who focus on the 2000 feet surrounding schools. Groups of two-five community members could go on bi-weekly trips to pick up all types of trash that constantly surround schools, which may or may not include syringes.