

Submitter: Ximena Levander

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

I am an addiction medicine clinician and researcher who cares for people with substance use disorders across Oregon. I am also a mom with a young child in daycare. I can understand the intention behind SB 1573 and have read through some of the testimony in support. What resonates is a strong desire to improve safety for Oregon children, families, and communities. This is an important goal worth working towards and I believe strongly we implement evidence-based and community-partnered policies to improve public safety and public health.

However, SB 1573 will not achieve this goal, in fact, it will make communities less safe. Efforts to prohibit syringe service programs from operating mobile or temporary locations within 2,000 feet (or any distance) of a school or licensed childcare facility will not protect children or families.

SB 1573 will have the opposite of its intended effect. Evidence is clear that these services including distribution of safe sterile supplies do not enable or promote drug use. Instead, syringe service programs reduce syringe litter by collecting and removing syringes from the areas where they operate thus reducing needle stick injuries for first responders and the public. Syringe service programs and community-based organizations operating throughout the state are often the only services safely disposing of syringes in particular communities. Syringe service programs also prevent disease outbreaks such as HIV, syphilis, and Hepatitis C. Syringe service programs particularly mobile ones serve as a critical bridge to engaging people in addiction care – providing supplies is often the first step for many in building trust and getting connected to substance use disorder treatment and recovery.

Limiting the work of vital syringe services programs and organizations will make things in Oregon worse and disrupt a lot of progress that has been made. There is still a lot of work to do and I am hopeful that we can do this work together to address the many challenges we face in Oregon related to substance use.

Sincerely,

Ximena Levander MD, MCR, FACP, FASAM  
Assistant Professor of Medicine