

Submitter: Xylem Nilsen
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.

As a social worker who has been supporting people who use drugs, and a sibling of someone who died of an overdose, I deeply know the importance of increasing access to harm reduction programs and services.

Harm reduction and syringe services programs are a vital part of the continuum of care for people who are using substances and restricting access to these life saving services will harm our communities. Syringe services are an evidence based practice to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like HIV and Hepatitis. They are a vital part of our overdose prevention efforts as a major source of naloxone distribution to communities at the highest risk of overdose death. Without these programs, our already struggling health care and public health systems will be dealing with the increase cost of caring for people who have injection related injuries and deaths associated with overdoses.

This policy would be hardest felt in rural communities the most as often the most effective way of providing care to people is to bring it to them. These areas may not have the populations to support a brick and mortar site but still deserve access to care.

Syringe Service programs strive to foster trust with people who are using drugs and this trust leads to increased connection to the health care system and to the drug treatment systems.

As syringe service programs are often the only means people have to safely dispose of their syringes, cutting off these programs could lead to an increase in syringe litter

rather than less of it.

I urge this committee to please center evidence based public health into your thinking about this bill and vote no.

Thank you for your time