

Submitter: Brian Chan
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573
RE: opposition to SB1573

Chair and members of the committee:

Ten plus years ago, a small rural community of Scott County, Indiana made national headlines for a large outbreak of HIV due to use of sharing of non-sterile syringes amongst people using intravenous drugs. A key tool in the response to this outbreak was syringe exchange.

I am an addiction medicine doctor and researcher, as well as a parent to a young child. Thus, I share the same desire to live, work, and have my child grow up in a community that is safe and clean. While the intentions behind SB1573 may be well meaning, they are misguided and not based on evidence. It's clear that these services, including syringe service programs do not increase drug use. They also serve to reduce litter by disposing of used syringes, are initial touchpoints for engaging in addictions and medical treatment, and link people to recovery services through outreach and building trust.

Now, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are in our communities- we need EVERY tool possible to fight against this devastating drug epidemic. Harm reduction and syringe exchanges are one of those tools. The language in this bill would effectively eliminate this tool, particularly in rural areas.

I urge the committee to vote against this bill. There are better solutions to address our children's and communities' safety. Let's work together to find more effective solutions to keep our communities safe and solve the addiction crisis.

Let us remember the lessons learned from Scott County.

Brian Chan MD MPH