

Submitter: Leah Carnine

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

I am a primary care medical provider and many of my patients benefit from harm reduction syringe service programs.

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 lifesaving 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.

The requirement may make the service inaccessible to rural residents. Syringe exchange services are proven to prevent HIV/HCV and overdose; therefore, loss of sites in rural communities is likely to increase the burden of substance those communities face. In addition, loss of SSP in rural locations will likely result in an increase of discarded syringes. In many communities, mobile SSP is the only resource for safe disposal of syringes.

We encourage open dialogue about any verified incidents related to SSP location and advocate for a community-based approach to placement of sites rather than the state telling communities where to place sites. Each community is different and has different needs, and SSP providers and communities benefit from active engagement with local law enforcement and local county and city leadership. This is what results in safe placement of critical public health services.

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.

Placing the burden of liability on syringe exchange programs is unreasonable. Many pharmacies sell syringes without offering the wrap around services that syringe exchange programs provide.

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 consideration