

Submitter: Robert Gandy
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement in opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 1573.

Syringe service programs are a proven, evidence-based public health intervention that protect both participants and the broader community. Senate Bill 1573 would undermine these benefits and create barriers that ultimately increase harm, rather than reduce it.

First, syringe service programs reduce the number of improperly discarded needles in public spaces. Experience in Oregon and across the country shows that when people have access to safe syringe exchange and disposal, fewer needles are left in parks, sidewalks, and neighborhoods. Restricting or destabilizing these programs does not eliminate syringe use, it eliminates safe disposal options.

Second, the geographic restrictions proposed in SB 1573 would reduce access in areas where the need is highest. Communities most affected by overdose, HIV, and Hepatitis C are often the same communities facing barriers such as limited transportation, housing instability, and reduced access to healthcare. Imposing geographic limits will disproportionately impact those at greatest risk and make it harder for programs to operate where they are most needed.

Third, syringe service programs are essential in reducing the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. These programs are widely supported by public health experts because they lower disease transmission without increasing drug use. Limiting access to sterile syringes will lead to preventable infections, higher healthcare costs, and worse long-term outcomes for individuals and communities in Oregon.

Fourth, syringe service programs are often a first point of contact with the healthcare system for people who are otherwise disconnected from care. They play a vital role in connecting individuals to substance use treatment, testing, wound care, vaccination, housing support, and other critical services. Weakening these programs cuts off an important pathway to treatment and recovery.

Finally, the increased legal liability created by SB 1573 would divert limited resources away from public health services. Programs would be forced to redirect funding toward legal compliance and risk management rather than direct services that protect health and save lives. This would significantly reduce the effectiveness of syringe

service programs statewide.

For these reasons, Oregon Senate Bill 1573 would undermine public health, reduce community safety, and weaken proven strategies that benefit the entire state. I respectfully urge the legislature to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Gandy