Submitter:	Casey Belle OConnor
On Behalf Of:	
Committee:	Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic:	SB1573

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

?I am writing to respectfully oppose Senate Bill 1573 as both a community member and a harm reductionist working in human services. While protecting children and families is a shared priority within the community, this bill would greatly undermine evidence based public health strategies that save lives and protect our community. Syringe service programs reduce the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C, provide protection from overdoses such as distributing naloxone, connect clients to treatment and healthcare, and promote safe disposal of used syringes for all, not just drug users. The proposed buffer zones within this bill would effectively eliminate access to these services in many communities leading to increased disease transmission, unsafe syringe disposal, and higher public health costs. Additionally, creating presumptions about syringe usage and ownership could expose service providers to litigation risks and discourage organizations from providing life saving services. Syringe exchange programs are not abstract policy tools. A 2,000 foot buffer around schools and childcare facilities would make it impossible to provide services in many areas, pushing people into isolation, increasing unsafe syringe disposal. The threat of legal action against providers only increases harm by discouraging organizations to show up for those in need. I urge you to understand that harm reduction is about care, dignity, and prevention. Not punishment or displacement. SB 1573 would push Oregon backwards in a time when compassion, evidence, and community based solutions are essential. For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose SB 1573 and instead work with public health experts and community members to strengthen harm reduction efforts that keep all Oregonians, including children, safe.

Thank you for your consideration,

?Casey Belle O'Connor