

Submitter: Cynthia Cannon Poindexter
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1573

Dear Senators:

I have been a social worker in the HIV pandemic since the mid-1980's, with decades of experience in HIV and hepatitis prevention. Syringe Exchange is a huge part of this disease prevention effort. While I understand the impetus of keeping infected syringes away from children, the geographic boundaries specified in this bill will only make it more difficult for syringe exchange vans to operate in Oregon's rural areas, where we have the highest rates of HIV and Hepatitis transmission. Syringe exchange programs are strategically located in collaboration with local communities, law enforcement, local government, community partners, and public health organizations. These prevention programs give injection drug users the option to enter case management, housing, addiction recovery, and mental health services; these programs are often their only entry point for such services. If you limit the options for locating syringe exchange programs, you may be drastically reducing access to rural communities. In addition, syringe exchange programs facilitate the safe disposal of used syringes, which is an important public health concern.

I urge this committee to use experience and evidence and listen to the health care professionals about this bill. Please vote no.