

I am writing in opposition to SB1573 because we should not make it harder for people to make healthier choices.

I also write in support of syringe service programs as a fundamental component of our shared public health infrastructure. These programs yield direct and positive outcomes that benefit all Oregonians:

Reduced community viral load of HIV and Hepatitis C

More of a virus in a community means EVERYONE is at a higher risk of being exposed. More sterile syringes means less sharing, which means less HIV and Hepatitis C. Many people choose to smoke rather than inject simply to avoid the risk of HIV, so providing a pipe is another way to prevent infections.

Reduced emergency department visits and hospitalizations

A “safer injection” means less risk of a skin infection, which can lead to ED visits and hospitalization. EVERYONE benefits from shorter lines at the ED and more available hospital beds.

Reduced syringe litter

The chance of getting poked by a syringe on the ground is low, and the chance of getting a viral infection from that poke is much lower. But still, syringe litter can be especially upsetting. Research shows that SSPs actually *reduce* the number of discarded syringes where they operate.

There is no evidence that operating syringe service programs within 2,000 feet of a school or licensed childcare facility increases harm to anyone. However, we have decades of overwhelming evidence of harm when SSP operations are limited or banned.

People who seek out these services and supplies are making a choice to be more mindful of their health and the health of people they care about. SSPs recognize that drug use can affect anyone and so everyone deserves access to healthier choices. Every time someone makes a healthier choice, we all win. Please do not make it harder to do this work. Please vote against SB1573.

Sincerely,
Christopher Hamel
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