

LD 1078:

Good afternoon Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer & honorable members of the Health and Human Services committee,

My name is Molly Whyte, I live in Lewiston, and I work for the Church of Safe Injection, a Maine CDC certified syringe service program and state funded recovery community center in downtown Lewiston.

Currently, it can take months to get a new location approved and certified by the CDC. The process is long, tedious, and sometimes by the time the location is approved there can be a change in accessibility to the folks who would be going to that location. In Lewiston, we are certified to operate on Main St, right downtown. However, we have many participants who drive from the outskirts of Androscoggin County and even further, just to access our program.

Currently in Lewiston, we are working closely with our city council to address the issue of improperly discarded syringes by relocating community sharps disposal containers and increased outreach efforts to ensure people know of the locations of each container. Working closely to address the concerns of Lewiston residents is really important and we need to be able to respond to the needs of not only our community, but the communities around us. We need to be able to drive across the bridge to Auburn to collect a full sharps container from a participant and provide them with sterile supplies and naloxone. Limiting proven public health strategies has never worked, and it shouldn't be how we address public health crises.

Outreach is an integral part of the work we do as we are able to connect and meet with folks who don't use our services, don't know the full scope of our services, or who may have preconceived notions of the work we do. Our ability to provide supplies while we do this outreach could greatly impact our ability to collect syringes while we also distribute more.

We urge you to really consider the impact that your vote and voices have when it comes to how we and other agencies are able to move forward in a time where we are seeing clusters of Hep B & alarming rates of HIV in the northern region. Please vote ought to pass, thank you.