

[Please Place on Organizational Letterhead]

July 20, 2006

The Honorable Ray Tretheway
Council Member, City of Sacramento
Sacramento City Hall
915 I Street, 5th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Sacramento City Disease Prevention Demonstration Project Proposal – SUPPORT

Dear Council Member Tretheway:

I am writing on behalf of **[Insert Organization Name]** to strongly support your proposed “City of Sacramento Disease Prevention Demonstration Project”.

The Sacramento City Disease Prevention Demonstration Project would authorize pharmacies within the city to sell up to 10 needles without a prescription to adults. To date, 14 counties – Yolo, Yuba, Solano, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Marin, Santa Cruz, Alameda, San Mateo, Sonoma, Humboldt, and Santa Clara – have authorized non-prescription syringe sales in California.

We believe this proposal will save lives and help reduce new infections. The consequences of sharing contaminated needles and syringes have taken a significant toll on the public’s health. Approximately one-third of AIDS cases in the United States, 20 percent of all reported AIDS cases in California and about 30 percent of all reported HIV/AIDS cases in Sacramento are associated with injection drug use. Contaminated syringes lead to increased rates of HIV and hepatitis C. Injection drug use or having sex with an injection drug user is the second most common risk factor for both men and women regardless of sexual orientation. The link between injection drug use and HIV is particularly strong for women and people of color. In California, 37.3 percent of all AIDS cases among women are traced back to syringe sharing. 24.3 percent of cases of AIDS among African American men and women and 22.4 percent of cases among Latinas are linked to syringe sharing. Numerous studies have been shown to significantly reduce needle-sharing and the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne infections among injection drug users and their sexual partners, without increasing rates of drug use, drug injection, or crime. By allowing needles to be sold in participating local pharmacies without a prescription, we will be able to combat the spread of HIV and hepatitis C.

We believe this proposal will save money in healthcare costs for newly infected individuals. According to the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services, by preventing one case of HIV, the County saves \$12,000.00 a year in medication alone; by preventing one case of Hepatitis C, the County saves \$9,000.00 a year. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that it costs between \$154,000 and \$196,000 to provide lifetime care to a person infected with HIV. This proposal would save hundreds of thousands of taxpayers’ dollars by preventing new infections while educating users with information about accessing drug treatment, HIV and hepatitis testing, and safety storage and disposal instructions.

Access to sterile syringes is one component of an overall comprehensive HIV prevention and education strategy designed to reduce HIV transmission among injection drug users. This proposal will eliminate a barrier to syringe access and serve as one more step needed to prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-borne diseases among injection drug users, their sexual partners, and their children without adversely affecting our community.

For these reasons, we strongly support your proposal. Thank you for your leadership on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]