



Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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May 14, 2025

The Honorable Cherelle L. Parker
Mayor
The City of Philadelphia
City Hall, Office 215
1400 John F Kennedy Blvd
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: PSAM's Opposition to Council Bill #240665

Dear Mayor Parker,

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine (PSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Pennsylvania who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, we write to express our strong opposition to the enactment of Council Bill (CB) #240665.

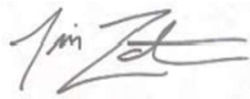
This harmful legislation would restrict the operating hours and capacity of mobile medical providers who perform critical services like overdose reversal. Further, the bill would also restrict the provision of non-medical services to unhoused people. Ultimately, this proposal is needlessly cruel and would not improve public health outcomes for residents of the 7th District. Rather, CB 240665 will likely lead to increased overdose deaths in the neighborhood.

Tragically, thousands of Pennsylvanians lose their lives each year to drug overdose, including over 1,100 Philadelphians in 2023.¹ However, the trends show that overdose deaths in Philadelphia have decreased in recent years, partially due to the increased availability of harm reduction materials like naloxone (also known as Narcan).² The science here is clear: harm reduction policies save lives. Specifically, harm reduction policies like the enhanced distribution of naloxone, drug testing equipment, and safe syringes to people who use drugs reduce the risk of overdose and increase likelihood of seeking treatment.^{3 4} Further, contrary to common conceptions, there is no evidence to suggest that harm reduction programs like those that provide syringe services contribute to crime and public disorder in surrounding communities.^{5 6} In turn, the provisions of CB 240665 would take us backward and restrict viable tools proven to improve health outcomes and reduce harm.

Proponents of CB 240665 point to instances of public disorder as justifications for the bill. While PSAM takes these community concerns seriously, we fear that the enactment of CB 240665 could worsen the situation for residents of the 7th District. Ultimately, if medical services are reduced or cut off entirely, public safety and public health will be jeopardized. Specifically, there could be increased instances of overdose or untreated disease like HIV. Simply put, mobile medical and non-medical providers play a crucial role in providing evidence-based services to vulnerable populations in Philadelphia. And while the situation in the 7th District is no doubt complex, neither the community nor the unhoused individuals would be better served by reducing the capacity of medical support. Instead, policymakers should focus on humane and evidence-based solutions such as scaling up treatment services and other community support for unhoused people with addiction.

Unfortunately, CB 240665 will not solve the problems faced in the 7th District and would restrict crucial medical services that people with addiction depend upon. **As such, we urge you to veto this harmful legislation.** Instead, we encourage you to work with stakeholders on all sides to develop solutions that emphasize treatment and public health, rather than punishment. We stand ready to assist in these efforts. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



James R. Latronica, DO, DFASAM
President
Pennsylvania Society of Addiction Medicine
E: james.r.latronica@gmail.com
C: (330) 416-4077

¹ Leonard, N. (2024) *Drug overdose deaths among Philadelphians fall for first time in 5 years, data show*. WHYY. <https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-overdose-deaths-decline/>

² Leonard, N. (2024) *Drug overdose deaths among Philadelphians fall for first time in 5 years, data show*. WHYY. <https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-overdose-deaths-decline/>

³ National Institutes on Drug Abuse. (2022). *Harm Reduction*. National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/harm-reduction#references>

⁴ Nassau, T., Kolla, G., Mason, K., Hopkins, S., Tookey, P., McLean, E., Werb, D., & Scheim, A. (2022). Service utilization patterns and characteristics among clients of integrated supervised consumption sites in Toronto, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-022-00610-y>

⁵ Trends in crime and the introduction of a needle exchange program. (2000). *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(12), 1933–1936. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.90.12.1933>

⁶ Levine, H., Bartholomew, T. S., Rea-Wilson, V., Onugha, J., Arriola, D. J., Cardenas, G., Forrest, D. W., Kral, A. H., Metsch, L. R., Spencer, E., & Tookes, H. (2019). Syringe disposal among people who inject drugs before and after the implementation of a Syringe Services Program. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 202, 13–17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.04.025>