



Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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October 26, 2023

The Honorable Julie M. Rogers
Chair
House Committee on Health Policy
124 N Capitol Ave
Room 519
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: MISAM's Support for HB 5178 and 5179

Dear Chair Rogers,

On behalf of the Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine (MISAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Michigan who specialize in the prevention, treatment, and recovery from addiction, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic.

We write today to express our support for HB 5178 and HB 5179. HB 5178 would authorize syringe service programs (SSPs) to operate more easily throughout the state of Michigan, while HB 5179 would expand the definition of drug checking equipment exempt from paraphernalia classification under state law. Together, these vital pieces of legislation would improve our state's response to the overdose epidemic at a time of great need.

MISAM strongly supports evidence-based policies to reduce the harm associated with drug use while also promoting public safety. SSPs are an important component of this holistic response to the overdose epidemic. Crucially, these programs distribute safe materials to people who use drugs, including syringes, medical supplies, and naloxone. Further, SSPs provide educational resources and pipelines to treatment for individuals with addiction. In fact, research has indicated that individuals who participate in SSPs are more likely to seek treatment and stop using drugs as a result.ⁱ SSPs are linked to many other positive public health outcomes. Considerable research demonstrates that the operation SSPs greatly reduces the spread of bloodborne infections, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).ⁱⁱ Studies indicate that SSPs are also extremely cost-effective, as each prevented case of Hepatitis C saves government insurers (e.g. Medicaid) an average of over \$300,000 per case prevented.ⁱⁱⁱ In sum, SSPs are proven and effective harm reduction programs.

SSPs already legally operate in our state. However, there is no statewide law on the books authorizing these programs.^{iv} Absent this important legal grounding, SSPs may encounter challenges obtaining permitting and accessing state materials. In turn, enacting HB 5178 will bolster the functionality of existing SSPs and expedite the process of opening new facilities in the communities of most need.

Relatedly, HB 5179 would broaden exemptions from drug paraphernalia classification under

state law. These exemptions include all testing products that determine if controlled substances contain 'chemicals, toxic substances, or hazardous compounds in quantities that can cause physical harm or death.' Drug checking equipment, such as fentanyl test strips (FTS), can be utilized by persons who use drugs to detect the presence of fentanyl and other chemicals with high accuracy.^v The testing of pre-obtained drugs is an important tool to address rising overdose deaths. Based on the results of these tests, individuals can take precautions accordingly. These precautions can prove lifesaving. Additionally, research suggests that these tests are associated with positive changes in drug use behavior and desire to seek treatment.^{vi vii} In turn, the enactment of HB 5179 is essential to ensuring that these potentially lifesaving tools are readily available in all corners of our state.

MISAM is proud to support evidence-based measures to address the ongoing overdose epidemic. **As such, we urge lawmakers to support the enactment of HB 5178 and HB 5179. In tandem, these important measures will reduce the harms associated with drug use and save lives.** Please feel free to contact me at polandc2@msu.edu if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Lewei (Allison) Lin, MD, MS
President, Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine



Cara A. Poland, MD, MEd, DFASAM
Advocacy Chair, Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine

ⁱ Aspinall EJ, Nambiar D, Goldberg, DJ, Hickman M, Weir A, Van Velzen, E, Palmateer N, Doyle, JS, Hellard ME, Hutchinson, SJ (2013). Are needle and syringe programmes associated with a reduction in HIV transmission among people who inject drugs: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 43(1), 235–248. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyt243>

ⁱⁱ Bernard CL, Owens DK, Goldhaber-Fiebert JD, Brandeau ML (2017). Estimation of the cost-effectiveness of HIV prevention portfolios for people who inject drugs in the United States: A model-based analysis. *PLoS Med*. 2017;14(5):e1002312. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1002312

ⁱⁱⁱ Ijioma SC, Pontinha VM, Holdford DA, Carroll NV (2021). Cost-effectiveness of syringe service programs, medications for opioid use disorder, and combination programs in hepatitis C harm reduction among opioid injection drug users: a public payer perspective using a decision tree. *J Manag Care Spec Pharm*. 2021;27(2):137-146. doi:10.18553/jmcp.2021.27.2.137

^{iv} Hep Elimination. (2023). Jurisdiction Assessments. https://eliminatehep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HEP - Elimination_Juris_Assess_allJDs.pdf

^v Appel G, Farmer B, & Avery J. (2021). Fentanyl Test Strips Empower People And Save Lives-So Why Aren't They More Widespread? *Health Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.1377/forefront.20210601.974263>

^{vi} Peiper NC, Clarke SD, Vincent LB, Ciccarone D, Kral AH, & Zibbell JE. (2019). Fentanyl test strips as an opioid overdose prevention strategy: Findings from a Syringe Services Program in the Southeastern United States. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 63, 122-128. hllRs://doi.o,rg/10.1016/i.drugpo.2018.08.007

^{vii} Krieger MS, Goedel WC, Buxton JA., Lysyshyn M, Bernstein E, Sherman SG, Rich JD, Hadland SE, Green, TC, & Marshall, B. D. L. (2018). Use of rapid fentanyl test strips among young adults who use drugs. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 61, 52-58.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drug.2018.09.009>