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# Assembly California Legislature



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February 18, 2020

Sonia Y. Angell, MD, MPH  
Director, California Department of Public Health  
PO Box 997377, MS 0500  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

Dear Director Angell,

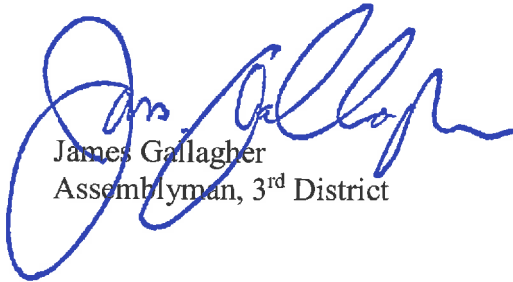
I write to express my strong concerns regarding the North Valley Harm Reduction Coalition (NVHRC) syringe distribution program, which was authorized by CDPH pursuant to California Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 121349 on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. While HIV and hepatitis C prevention are worthy goals, I am concerned that this program is ineffective in addressing future outbreaks while causing extensive negative community impacts. These include the large distribution of needles and drug paraphernalia to drug users, distribution to minors, deterioration of public spaces, and improper needle disposal, among others. I hope CDPH can address these and other issues, specifically:

- 1. Underage Distribution.** Health and Safety Code Section 11364.5 establishes 18 as the minimum age to have access to drug paraphernalia. However, it has been brought to my attention that minors are able to receive needles through this program. In one documented instance, a minor was given 30 syringes, among other drug paraphernalia, no questions asked. **What is the minimum age to distribute and receive needles through programs established under HSC Section 121349? What will the Department do to investigate claims of underage distribution, and what are the penalties for underage distribution?**
- 2. Improper Disposal.** Local law enforcement officers have described a rapidly deteriorating situation stemming from the NVHRC syringe distribution program. Officers have seen an increase in property destruction and improper disposal. Large quantities of contaminated needles are also being found in public spaces. CDPH required NVHRC, as a condition of approval, to clean up any reported syringe litter within a reasonable time frame. **What does CDPH consider a 'reasonable time frame' for NVHRC to clean up reported syringe litter?**
- 3. Violating Terms of Operation.** CDPH required NVHRC, as a condition of approval, to operate a hotline for the public to report improperly disposed syringes. However, the 'hotline' is not adequately staffed, resulting in law

enforcement officers now being taken off the beat in order to safely collect improperly discarded syringes. Additionally, NVHRC syringes have been found in Oroville, Gridley, and throughout Butte County. However, NVHRC is refusing to clean up these needles outside of the City of Chico. **Does this violate the CDPH terms of operation? Should the NVHRC permit be revoked until the organization can get a handle on reporting and syringe collection?**

I appreciate any assistance CDPH can offer to address these questions, and a response by February 24<sup>th</sup>. It is unacceptable that law enforcement officers and the public's safety are being put at risk while this program continues to operate. Given the public health threats caused by continued operation, I also ask that CDPH consider revoking authorization of this program pending further review. Thank you for your attention to this matter, if you need further information please do not hesitate to contact my office at (916) 319-2003.

Sincerely,



James Gallagher  
Assemblyman, 3<sup>rd</sup> District

cc. Marisa Ramos, Ph.D, Chief, Office of AIDS, Center for Infectious Diseases, CDPH