



Watsonville Police Department

215 Union Street, P.O. Box 1930
Watsonville, California 95077
(831) 768.3300
police@cityofwatsonville.org

Chief of Police David Honda

May 14, 2019

California Department of Public Health
Office of AIDS
P.O. Box 997377, MS 0500
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377
SEPApplication@cdph.ca.gov

Dear Director Karen Smith, MD, MPH:

I am writing to you in response to the application submitted by the Harm Reduction Coalition of Santa Cruz County (a.k.a. Harm Reduction Road Show) to operate a Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) in the County of Santa Cruz, specifically, in the City of Watsonville. I strongly oppose this application.

In reviewing the application, I am concerned regarding the following issues:

- The applicant refers to a “significant overdose increase” in the City of Watsonville in 2018. In reviewing our statistical data there is no indication of an increase in overdoses in our City, in fact, there was no change from 2017 to 2018
- The applicant makes no distinction between overdoses from those involving syringes to those related to pills or alcohol. Our statistical data indicates the majority of our reported overdoses were from the use of pills and alcohol, not syringes
- The applicant indicates the intent to open a fixed site at the Salvation Army in the City of Watsonville; however, the Salvation Army has stated this is not the case and it has not been approved by their leadership
- The County of Santa Cruz has a Syringe Services Program that is overseen by trained medical personnel; there is no indication that the applicant has such trained personnel
- The applicant does not mention how they would coordinate with the County Syringe Services Program to ensure the best outcome or who would hold them accountable for actual exchanges or for the clean-up of syringes and needles that have been improperly discarded
- There is no verification the applicant can or has met compliance standards set forth by the California Health and Safety Code
- I am not aware of any outreach conducted in our community to determine the need or the desire for such a program to be opened in our City



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- I am not aware of any outreach conducted with our local City leaders or department leads to determine the need or the desire for such a program to be opened in our City

I believe in programs that assist our community members who have addiction issues to help overcome their addictions, protect them from infections, and improve their health. But I also believe we have a responsibility to protect the balance of our community from the hazards of syringe litter that has surfaced in our sidewalks, our trails, and our parks. I believe this program would exacerbate the syringe litter issue. I cannot support any program that will put our families and our children at risk from exposure to hazards due to improperly discarded syringes and needles. Please consider these concerns and deny the application.

Respectfully,

David Honda, Chief of Police
City of Watsonville

CC:

Senator Bill Monning, 17th Senate District

Assemblymember Robert Rivas, District 30

Mayor Francisco Estrada, City of Watsonville

Council of the City of Watsonville

Matt Huffaker, City Manager, City of Watsonville

Jim Hart, Sheriff-Coroner, Santa Cruz County

County of Santa Cruz Health Services Agency

Officer Charles Bailey, President - Watsonville Police Officers Association (WPOA)