

Background Fact Sheet:

LR 1513 “**An Act to Reduce the Spread of Infectious Disease through Shared Hypodermic Apparatus**”

Submitted by Rep. Elizabeth Miller

Goals:

- A. Get dirty needles out of circulation to:
 - Reduce disease transmission through needle sharing among IDUs
 - Reduce disease transmission through accidental needle sticks (resulting from inappropriate disposal)
 - Reduce hazardous medical waste in the regular waste stream
- B. Reduce health care related costs through reduced disease transmission
 - Reduce disease transmission through needle sharing among IDUs
 - Reduce disease transmission through accidental needle sticks (resulting from inappropriate disposal)
- C. Increase effectiveness of existing syringe exchange programs (SEPs)
 - Reduce fear based barriers to using SEPS (fear of arrest for possession)
 - Increased incidence of using mostly or exclusively clean needles (by making access easier, especially for those who live great distances from SEP fixed site exchanges)
 - Allow baseline harm reduction kits to be provided to participants

SEPs are an important “bridge” toward treatment at which IDUs can interact with program staff to receive reliable and nonjudgmental information on harm reduction and treatment options. The protections included in this measure, increase the incentives for IDUs to participate in SEPs. Participation enhances progress toward all three goals.

Bill Summary:

- a) Provides protection from prosecution for syringe exchange program participants for possession, transportation, or trafficking of hypodermic apparatuses (for any number of syringes);
- b) Provides protection from prosecution for syringe exchange program participants for possession, transportation, or trafficking of trace amounts of scheduled drugs or narcotics in syringes when going to a SEP location;
- c) Instructs the ME CDC to promulgate rules consistent with this law (e.g. allow provision of harm reduction kits, no limits on the number of syringes that can be exchanged).

The bill does not change the criminal code. It does make exceptions to certain criminal codes for syringe exchange program participants.