

To: Governor Gavin Newsom, The California Department of Public Health, and the County of San Diego.

We are writing to express our opposition to current and proposed needle exchange and drug paraphernalia distribution programs, including safe smoking devices, in North San Diego County. While we understand and appreciate the attempt to help our vulnerable populations, needle exchange and associated programs are detrimental to neighborhoods and communities, and we are united against the implementation of these programs in North County.

The County of San Diego has recently made it clear that it intends to distribute thousands of needles using state-funds under the guise of a “Harm Reduction” program. The only thing these programs do is further harm our communities stricken with substance-abuse disorders. This program admits outright not all needles distributed will be collected. Needles are already commonly found in our parks, beaches, waterways, canyons, and sidewalks. Within one year, as many as 500,000 needles could be distributed in our region, without any mechanism in place to compel users into treatment. By giving out needles and drug paraphernalia, we are enabling and implicitly condoning illegal drug-use without accountability or requirement for treatment.

“Harm reduction” is an umbrella term used to describe a variety of methods aimed at helping those struggling with addiction get access to services, education, and resources. We want to help our communities by providing resources such as overdose prevention education, naloxone (an overdose-reversing drug), sexual health education, and information about available behavioral health and social support services.

However, using tax-payer funds to give out needles, pipes, and other drug paraphernalia, is not the compassionate nor the responsible thing to do. Efforts should come with requirements of treatment and accountability, supporting people suffering from addiction with the resources to break their addiction and tackle root causes of substance-abuse. These members of our community need substance-abuse treatment and rehabilitation. Tax-payer dollars would be far better spent on treatment, outreach, and prevention.

We ask for all partners, County, State, and our valuable non-profits, to refrain from funding or providing needle exchange services in our cities and communities. Instead, we ask for your help in addressing the root causes of substance-abuse, by providing prevention resources, education, and treatment programs to encourage healthy change. We insist on providing a hand up, not handouts that perpetuate illegal drug use. Together, we can help put people on a path to recovery and help end of the cycle of abuse.



Jim Desmond
San Diego County Supervisor



John Franklin
Vista Mayor



Rebecca Jones
San Marcos Mayor



Dane White
Escondido Mayor



Keith Blackburn
Carlsbad Mayor



Ryan Keim
Oceanside Deputy Mayor