

May 11, 2021

The Honorable Russell Bowers  
Speaker  
Arizona House of Representatives  
Capitol Complex  
1700 W. Washington Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890

Re: AMA Support for S.B. 1250

Dear Speaker Bowers:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing in support of Arizona Senate Bill (S.B.) 1250, which would help increase access to naloxone, sterile needle and syringe exchange programs, and other evidence-based harm reduction measures. The AMA supports S.B. 1250 since it would—as the language makes clear—provide, “scientifically proven ways of mitigating health risks associated with drug use and other high-risk behaviors” through the creation of an evidence-based “overdose and disease prevention program.” We were pleased to see S.B. 1250 pass the Arizona Senate, and we respectfully ask that you put this bill up for a final vote in the Arizona House of Representatives.

The AMA supports S.B. 1250 as it helps accomplish three main goals of overdose and disease prevention programs identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).<sup>1</sup> These programs help:

- Prevent transmission of blood-borne infections;
- Stop substance use; and
- Support public safety.

The links between these services are a critical benefit to overdose and disease prevention programs. As created by S.B. 1250, public safety would be protected by facilitating the safe disposal of used needles and syringes. In addition, S.B. 1250 would help reduce stigma for individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) to receive information and access to other important health services, including hepatitis C and HIV diagnosis and treatment, as well as treatment for a SUD. According to the CDC, “people who inject drugs who regularly use an [overdose and disease prevention program] are more than five times as likely to enter treatment for a substance use disorder, and nearly three times as likely to report reducing or discontinuing injection as those who have never used a [syringe services program] SSP.”

S.B. 1250 will also help Arizona save lives from an opioid-related overdose. As more people die from illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, it is essential to ensure greater availability of the life-saving medication, naloxone. According to a 2020 study from the CDC,<sup>2</sup> overdose and disease prevention programs distributed more than 700,000 doses of naloxone, including refills, during a 12-month study period that captured the responses of 263 SSPs nationwide. S.B. 1250 will help further overdose and disease prevention program efforts to implement evidence-based overdose education and naloxone distribution programs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp/syringe-services-programs-factsheet.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6933a2.htm>

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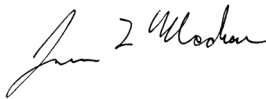
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Finally, we support S.B. 1250 as it provides important legal protections for employees, volunteers, and participants of an overdose and disease prevention program in Arizona. S.B. 1250 wisely takes a public health approach to protect against a charge, arrest, or prosecution for the possession of injection supplies provided by or returned to an overdose and disease prevention program. We are concerned, however, that the vague requirement of “verification,” (that the supplies were obtained from a program) could limit the full potential of S.B. 1250. We urge that this be addressed in subsequent rulemaking to ensure that the verification requirement does not unintentionally impinge on the otherwise laudable provisions throughout S.B. 1250.

For the reasons explained above, we urge you to call a vote on S.B. 1250 and help save lives in Arizona through these proven harm reduction measures.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blaney-Koen, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at [daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org](mailto:daniel.blaney-koen@ama-assn.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Arizona Medical Association  
The Honorable Nancy Barto  
The Arizona House of Representatives