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May 1, 2023

Representative Kelly Moller, Chair
Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
479 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Ron Latz, Chair
Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Minnesota State Senate
3105 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Moller and Chair Latz:

Thank you for the opportunity allowing the University of Minnesota Addiction Consult Team to weigh-in on specific legislation included in the House and Senate versions of the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bills, SF2909.

The House version of the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bill includes HF2041 (Gomez)/SF2261 (Oumou Verbeten), a bill that authorizes syringe services to possess, distribute, and dispose of syringes; authorizes the hypodermic syringes and changes to the state statute related to drug paraphernalia (See House version, Article 16, Sections 1-6 and 13-15).

We are pleased to see HF2041's language included in the Omnibus Judiciary and Public Safety Finance bill as drug paraphernalia policy should be focused on saving lives and reducing the risks of overdose.

Penalizing drug use and paraphernalia possession does not decrease drug use, and is exacerbating the overdose crisis. Tougher laws and sentences around drug paraphernalia results in more deaths and avoidable diseases, particularly impacting low-income people and communities of color. These drug paraphernalia laws also threaten to punish nonusers involved in harm reduction activities.

The legislation, as it now stands, allows Minnesota to move forward with allowing syringe services providers to operate under and within defined parameters as well as decriminalizing drug paraphernalia and residues contained therein. These changes will reduce harm and save lives of Minnesotans and we urge the conference committee members to support the inclusion of HF2041.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the conference committee.

Sincerely,



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Sen. Judy Seeberger
Sen. Bonnie Westlin