An Environmental Crisis: The Dangers and Potential Solutions to Hypodermic Needle Pollution

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Hypodermic Needle Crisis

- What is the Hypodermic Needle Crisis facing our environment and community?
- An unfortunate byproduct of homelessness and drug abuse
- Current systems in place lack effectiveness and reach.

Effects on our community

- Community members have reported pollution of these dangerous biohazards in both public and private spaces.
- Many citizens feel unsafe enjoying the beauty of the peninsula community out of fear of an incident.
- Dangerous to human health and sanitation, as well as the cleanliness of the ecosystem.

Reported 10/25/17: “Found a bunch on the sand at the pier under the wall this weekend. Coming out of the water a cop standing on the wall asked if we would pick them up and hand them up to him as he was standing on the wall.” - From the San Diego Reader

Reported by an environmental club leader 03/23/2024
“As a member of CSF at PLHS, our club has found over 25 needles while doing our last three beach clean up.We discovered them near the boardwalk in pacific beach near the amusement park and Ocean Beach by the pier

Public testimony

- From CSF club member “ we have been doing beach clean up’s for around three weeks and in total we have found 20+ needles on various beaches
- From Janise Calhoun “ I am a global leader in biohazardous waste. Our company comes to local hospitals weekly and pick up the needles to be burned and replaced with sanitized containers and bags”

Research into Potential Solutions

- As previously established existing systems can be limited
- Conducted research into how other cities handled their needle crises- took San Francisco as model.
- Researched safe public needle disposal systems
- Research conducted illustrates that cities with safe needle disposal systems have reduced needle contamination by as much as 8x (Tookes et al.).
- Quantitative research demonstrates that when implemented systems get good usage, utilized by target communities (Levine et al.)

Proposition: Installation

- To reach a proposal we have consulted many research sources and experts in the field.
- The city of San Francisco operates its disposal system through a system of local nonprofits, city agencies, and materials and upkeep from the State Clearinghouse.
- We propose that the City of San Diego work in conjunction with local nonprofits and the State Clearinghouse to implement these safe public needle disposal systems to better our community and environment.

Proposition: Implementation and Maintenance

- We propose the City implement these systems in areas of the community with high volumes of unhoused individuals: such as areas of Rosecrans, public parks, public restrooms, and along the beaches.
- We propose that the city work in conjunction with local nonprofits and with state, federal, and county departments to maintain and facilitate these systems.
- To ensure the safety of these systems we suggest the city install the heavy metal disposal systems as seen in the image.

For Us and the Environment

- Safe needle disposal systems have been quantitatively demonstrated to reduce pollution.
- Increased safety for all those in our community
- Implementation of these systems would give the residents of the peninsula safer access to the ecosystem.

Works Cited

- Levine, Harry , et al. “Syringe Disposal among People Who Inject Drugs before and after the Implementation of a Syringe Services Program.” *Science Direct*, Elsevier, 1 Sept. 2019, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871619301978?via%3Dihub. Accessed 2 Apr. 2024.
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- Tookes, Hansel, et al. “A Comparison of Syringe Disposal Practices among Injection Drug Users in a City with versus a City without Needle and Syringe Programs.” *Science Direct*, Elsevier, 1 June 2012, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871611005229. Accessed 14 Mar. 2024.

Thank you for listening!