



March 25, 2025

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The Honorable Mia Bonta
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health
1020 N Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 396 (Tangipa) - Oppose

Dear Chair Bonta,

The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California’s sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, opposes AB 396. This bill would impose unnecessary and burdensome administrative and enforcement requirements on syringe services programs (SSPs) and local health officers, threatening critical partnerships and public health infrastructure.

SSPs are essential public health partners, serving communities that are often marginalized and hard to reach. They provide effective, evidence-based programs that reduce the transmission of HIV, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases, while also providing services such as STD testing, naloxone, vaccinations, meals, and referrals to care and treatment – including for individuals who use syringes for insulin and other medical conditions. AB 396 would undermine this vital work by imposing tracking and enforcement requirements that will divert resources away from health promotion and toward administrative compliance.

AB 396 charges local health officers with tracking individual syringes. These enforcement responsibilities risk damaging the trust and collaboration between SSPs and local health departments, which is foundational to successful public health efforts.

Decades of research has shown that SSPs do not increase syringe litter – in fact, they reduce it. These programs are already required to offer on-site disposal and distribute containers for safe syringe return.

Finally, AB 396 would place a significant burden on the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), which would be responsible for managing a large and complex data system with no accompanying infrastructure of funding. This is not the appropriate role for our state public health agency.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose AB 396. Now is not the time to compromise our partnerships with SSPs or redirect vital public health capacity toward a costly and ineffective enforcement scheme.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director
Health Officers Association of California