

# ACT NOW: Urge Ohio State Representatives to Vote YES on H.B. 182 the legalization of syringe exchange programs

The AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland urges you to contact your State Representative and tell them to support the legalization of syringe exchange programs in Ohio. Syringe exchange programs are important because they help prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis, and both are on a rise throughout Ohio.

**Your action is needed NOW because decisions will be made this week.**

**Background:** Currently in Ohio, syringe exchange programs are deemed illegal unless an emergency order is issued by either a health commissioner or a mayor. Cleveland and Portsmouth currently are the only cities in Ohio that have been able to obtain a syringe exchange program through this route. Other cities throughout Ohio have not been able to obtain the emergency order needed to allow for a syringe exchange in their community.

Syringe exchange programs are a harm reduction program in which intravenous drug users are able to turn in used syringes for new, clean syringes. Access to sterile syringes protect injection drug users, their partners and children, law enforcement officers and our communities in Ohio from bloodborne pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis. Injection drug use is directly and indirectly associated with one-third of all AIDS cases in the United States. Injection drug use is also the main transmission route for Hepatitis. There are an estimated 200,000 Ohioans infected with the hepatitis C virus.

## What You Can Do:

- **Determine who your State Representative is** [Click here](#) to find out!
- **Call** the State House switchboard at 1.800.282.0253 **TODAY** and ask for your State Representative (see talking points below to use once you are connected to that office).

- **Email or Fax** a letter to your State Representative using the sample below. Time is too short to mail, so please email or fax. Go to <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/> for fax numbers.
- **Tell everyone what you did and encourage them to do the same!**

## Talking Points

### **Introduction**

- I am a constituent and I vote.
- I'm concerned about the spread of HIV and Hepatitis from the reusing of syringes.
- Syringe exchange programs save money - the average lifetime cost of HIV care is \$618,900 while a syringe costs less than \$1.
- I urge my State Representative to vote yes for the legalization of syringe exchange programs in Ohio.

### **What are syringe exchange programs?**

- Syringe exchange programs are a harm reduction program in which intravenous drug users are able to turn in used syringes for new clean syringes.
- These programs have been shown to reduce HIV and Hepatitis rates in the communities they are placed in.
- In communities with syringe exchange programs the number of improperly disposed of syringes drastically decreased.

### **Why are syringe exchange programs necessary in Ohio?**

- Syringe exchange programs decrease the transmission of HIV and decrease hepatitis risk behaviors.
  - Right now there are an estimated 200,000 Ohioans infected with the hepatitis C virus.
  - Intravenous drug use is directly and indirectly associated with one-third of all AIDS cases in the United States.
- HIV rates among injection drug users decreased by 5% a year in cities with syringe exchange programs, while cities without these programs had a 3% increase in HIV rates.