

Good morning,

Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about Overdose Prevention Centers.

My name is Elizabeth Deutsch. I am speaking to you today as an RN with 28 years of experience primarily in Emergency medicine, Labor and Delivery and currently Substance Use Disorder. I am a concerned constituent who works in an opioid treatment program, but I am not here as a representative of the Howard Center. I am the Director of Nursing and the Assistant Director of the Howard Center's Chittenden Clinic. The Clinic is Vermont's largest hub, our current census is 928 patients. We see between 150 and 250 patients and dispense 900-1200 doses of methadone daily.

These are the patients who have made it to treatment. These patients receive support and assistance. We provide mental health support along with medication assisted treatment to treat opioid use disorder. Our medical providers are able to provide education on preventing sexually transmitted infections including HIV. We can help people get access to the wound care they need, decreasing the burden on the hospital system. Every day our MDs, nurses, and clinicians help people move away from chaotic drug use.

I highlight this work because 70% of people who died from overdose in Vermont last year had never been in contact with a treatment program. Overdose prevention centers bring people into a safe environment where they can use drugs without the risk of dying. However, that is not the only benefit of OPCs. They also bring people into contact with resources to support moving away from chaotic drug use. People who have utilized OPCs are more likely to get treatment for their opioid use disorder. There are More than 100 OPCs in operation in more than 60 jurisdictions around the world. No person has died of an overdose at any OPC in more than 30 years of operations.

Currently New York City is operating two OPCs. A NY State Health Department Feasibility Study found that opening four OPCs in NYC would save up to 130 lives and \$7 million in direct health care costs per year. I recognize that our population is smaller than NYC, however, Burlington could save the lives of our neighbors. While also seeing a decrease in healthcare spending and lowering the burden on EMS and UVMHC.

Last year Vermont saw 212 overdose deaths. The VT department of health information also shows that this is higher than the previous 3-year average. We are seeing an increase in number of Vermonters dying of a preventable cause, 212 deaths are 212 too many. We cannot do nothing as our friends, neighbors, and fellow Vermonters are dying from a disease that we have evidenced based treatment for. I am imploring you approve overdose prevention centers and H. 72