



March 1, 2024

Dear Members of the VT Legislature,

We are writing to you today to voice Out in the Open's strong support for legalizing overdose prevention centers in the state of Vermont. Out in the Open is focused on building community, visibility, knowledge, and power with rural LGBTQ+ people.

We write to you today not only as Out in the Open, an organization working with and for rural LGBTQ+ Vermonters, but also from some of our staff's own lived experiences with substance use and as harm reduction practitioners. Harm reduction saves lives every day, and **legalizing overdose prevention centers is a necessary next step in expanding access to harm reduction services for people who use drugs (PWUD).**

Our staff who have been working in the harm reduction field for years have overwhelmingly heard from PWUD in our community here in VT that there is a desire to have a space where they can go and be themselves. A space where they can use substances without fear of persecution, isolation, or death. A space where they can be warm, where they can see their friends, where they can be intoxicated and not be kicked out due to that.

It is not new information that overdose prevention centers are proven methods of reducing both risk of overdose in general and fatal overdoses across the board. That isn't the only thing that overdose prevention centers offer though. These spaces offer PWUD an environment where their autonomy is uplifted and held with dignity. They are often spaces where PWUD can connect with themselves, connect with their community, and connect with additional resources when desired. **Legalizing overdose prevention centers legalizes life.** It shows people who use drugs that their life holds value and meaning, that they are wanted in the world, and that their decisions about their body are theirs to make.

Some of our work at Out in the Open is dedicated to expanding access to equitable health care and health systems and to creating communities of care throughout communities across the state. It is for these reasons that we urge you to support H.72.



In solidarity and with hope for what is to come, YIMBY! (Yes, In My Backyard!)

Sincerely,
Out in the Open

Building Rural LGBTQ+ Power