



Vermont Businesses
for Social Responsibility

VBSR Letter in Support of H.72: Overdose Prevention Centers in Vermont

March 19, 2024

Our Mission: To leverage the power of business for positive social and environmental impact

Our Vision: A just, thriving, and transformative economy for all people and the planet

Chair Lyons and Committee Members,

Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR) is a statewide, nonprofit business association with a mission to leverage the power of business for positive social and environmental impact. VBSR represents over 700 member businesses across 46 industries. Today, we write to support H.72, the legislation establishing the legal framework for Overdose Prevention Centers to operate at the state level in Vermont.

With increases in overdose fatality deaths year after year here in Vermont, we urgently need a decisive public health response to opioid abuse that will address public safety, the impact on our workforce and downtown economic centers, disease prevention, access to recovery, and wrap-around support and medical services, while maintaining compassionate care. Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) offer these critical features of a successful statewide strategy and have been proven successful when implemented.

Currently, Vermont residents injecting illegal substances, such as fentanyl, often resort to using in public spaces, seeking exposure in the event of an overdose. Public drug use creates conditions that are not sustainable for our businesses and communities, often driving residents, workers, and consumers away from accessing our community spaces. OPCs are associated with **decreases** in public drug use and related litter, such as syringes and needles.

As the opioid crisis progresses, our businesses and workplaces are directly impacted. Employees do not leave substance use struggles at home. Productivity, morale, lower health insurance costs, employee turnover and workplace safety are directly connected to the well-being of our workforce. For those working within industries with high levels of workplace injury, they are often more susceptible to substance use disorders (SUD). In situations with inadequate paid leave, many workers seek opioid prescriptions to manage the pain from an occupational injury. For these reasons, OPCs are directly tied to our local business communities.

Opioid addiction impacts our employees, our businesses, and our communities, creating an economic ripple that is widely and deeply felt. OPCs won't solve the overdose fatality crisis or substance use disorder on their own, but research shows they can and must be a critical component of our response. We urge you to pass H.72, which would create safer communities for all Vermonters.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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