



Office of Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak

149 CHURCH STREET • BURLINGTON, VT 05401 • (802) 865-7272

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 14, 2025
To: House Human Services Committee
From: Joe Magee, Deputy Chief of Staff
Re: Testimony on Overdose Prevention Center Implementation

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify in front of the House Human Services Committee regarding overdose prevention center (OPC) implementation in the City of Burlington. I want to start by thanking this committee for the many hours spent deliberating on H. 72, now Act 178.

Progress to Date

Since Act 178 became law, the City of Burlington has taken several steps to prepare for the implementation of an overdose prevention center pilot in the City. Below is a summary of those steps taken to move this forward in recent months.

Guidelines: In late Summer, the Mayor and City staff met with the Department of Health to provide feedback on the guidelines. This was a constructive and collaborative process, VDH was very responsive, and I want to extend our thanks to Dr. Levine and VDH staff for that.

Zoning: Our Office of City Planning has drafted an amendment to the City's Zoning Ordinance to ensure OPCs are correctly defined in our Municipal Code. This amendment was initially presented to the Burlington Planning Commission on August 13, 2024, and will be brought forward for approval in late winter or early spring 2025.

Hiring of Special Assistant on Overdose Prevention Center Implementation: In early December, the City hired Theresa Vezina, a long-time harm reductionist and public health advocate to serve as the Mayor's Special Assistant on OPC Implementation. Special Assistant Vezina has spent many years working statewide and in Burlington on harm reduction and running Syringe Services Programs (SSPs), and she brings both professional expertise and a deep personal passion for the work.

Next Steps

Since she began in December, Special Assistant Vezina has been building a roadmap for OPC Implementation, meeting with stakeholders and interested community partners, and drafting documents for the forthcoming request for letters of interest and then formal request for proposals from interested providers. The request for letters of interest will be published in the coming weeks.

Looking ahead, will work closely with stakeholders and city staff on the provider selection process, as well as with the Department of Health to ensure they are apprised of each stage of our pilot project.

I want to thank the committee for the invitation to testify today. Special Assistant Vezina and I look forward to future engagement with the Committee as we continue this important work.