

PHILIP B. SCOTT
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 30, 2024

The Honorable BetsyAnn Wrask
Clerk of the Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Ms. Wrask:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I'm returning H.72, *An act relating to harm-reduction criminal justice response to drug use*, without my signature because of my objections described herein.

Drug addiction is something we must continuously address, and this important work is never done. That's why year after year, I have prioritized expansion and enhancement of prevention, enforcement, treatment, and long-term recovery services. I have been urging the Legislature to strengthen the law enforcement response to the increasingly toxic drug stream entering our state. And I feel for every family grieving an overdose death.

While these sites are well-intentioned, this costly experiment will divert financial resources from proven prevention, treatment and recovery strategies, as well as harm reduction initiatives that facilitate entry into treatment rather than continued use. While it may consolidate the widespread drug use in Burlington into a smaller area within the city, it will come at the expense of the treatment and recovery needs of other communities, for whom such a model will not work.

Vermont's existing overdose prevention strategies – including widespread Narcan distribution, fentanyl testing strips, needle exchanges, enhanced prevention, treatment and recovery through local coalitions are resulting in some positive trends in relation to overdose deaths. And paired with increased enforcement, and the ability to invest Opioid Settlement funds in additional strategies like drug testing, naloxone vending machines, contingency management and expanded outreach, I'm hopeful we will continue to see fewer and fewer overdose deaths.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip B. Scott". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip B. Scott
Governor