

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Good morning council members, My name is Brenda, and I am a school nurse serving a school community in Downtown Los Angeles, bordering Skid Row. I am here today to advocate for the implementation of strategically placed sharps containers near school sites, along with clearly marked street signage identifying their locations, to prevent the improper disposal of used needles on and around school campuses. Homelessness and illegal drug use remain ongoing public health crises in DTLA and its surrounding neighborhoods. Syringe Service Programs (SSPs), some located within five minutes of the school I serve, provide clean needles to individuals experiencing homelessness as a harm-reduction strategy to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. However, the high volume of needle distribution has resulted in a significant increase in unreturned and improperly discarded used syringes throughout our community. Statewide data from California demonstrates a dramatic rise in unreturned needles following a policy change in 2019—from approximately 115,000 unreturned needles between 2011 and 2018 to nearly 2.5 million between 2019 and 2023. This increase has had direct and dangerous consequences for our school community. Used, uncapped needles are routinely found on our campus playground, at the school entrance, and at the bus stop adjacent to the school—an area heavily trafficked by our students and their families. Our plant manager collects a minimum of ten used needles each week during morning safety rounds before students arrive on campus. The presence of discarded needles poses serious health and safety risks, including:

- Needle-stick injuries to children, school staff, and sanitation workers
- Potential transmission of blood-borne diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV
- Exposure to residual drugs left in used syringes.

For these reasons, I urge City Council members to prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of the children and families in this community. Increasing the number of sharps containers near school sites, combined with clear and visible street signage indicating their locations, can significantly reduce the number of unreturned and improperly discarded needles—especially those that make their way onto school grounds. Schools should be a haven for children living in and around Skid Row. Our students deserve to feel safe and protected

within the walls of their educational institutions. Thank you for your time and consideration.