

Testimony
Engrossed Senate Bill 2198-Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman

March 6, 2019

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Director of the Behavioral Health Division of the Department of Human Services (Department). I appear today to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2198.

Senate Bill 2198 adds language to century code defining the partnership between the Department and the Department of Health in the implementation of the syringe services program. The Department does currently partner, bringing content and connections to ensure the syringe exchange programs act as a source of engagement. Research has shown that people who inject drugs are five times more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and more likely to reduce or stop injecting when they use a syringe services program (Center for Disease Control).

The language addition on lines 2-3 of page 3 is the result of a request from local public health units currently operating syringe services programs. This addition clarifies the original intent of syringe services programs and ensures residue within paraphernalia will not be considered possession resulting in legal charges and eliminating the effectiveness of these programs.

Senate Bill 2198 also adds language to include suicide prevention in the definition of behavioral health, as defined in Chapter 50-06.01. This aligns with the current request in Senate Bill 2012 and the Executive Budget Request to transfer the suicide prevention program from the Department of Health to the Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions.