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AB 396 – Needle and Syringe Labeling

Summary:

AB 396, aims to enhance public safety and accountability for needle and syringe exchange services in California by requiring facilities to label each needle with a serial number, as well as keep a record of each needle.

Existing law:

Under current law The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is authorized to permit entities to provide needle and syringe exchange services in areas at risk for disease outbreaks. The Medical Waste Management Act currently regulates the proper disposal of, sharps waste, but lacks specific provisions for tracking individual needles or syringes.

Issue:

Existing laws allow entities to provide needle and syringe exchange services in areas deemed high-risk for the rapid spread of infectious diseases such as HIV and viral hepatitis. However, widespread concerns have emerged over the improper disposal of needles and syringes, regardless of their source, creating serious public health and safety risks in communities. Discarded needles pose a direct threat to residents, first responders, and cleanup crews, significantly

increasing the cost and complexity of remediation efforts. AB 396 will provide critical data on the extent of improper needle disposal and help ensure that individuals are not

obtaining them from state-approved facilities without proper oversight. Addressing this issue is crucial, as the state has already allocated more than \$131 million to cleaning up homeless encampments—many of which have used needles—further straining public resources and endangering workers tasked with cleanup efforts.

Solution:

Requiring facilities to label used needles can greatly enhance safety, support harm reduction efforts, and protect both the individuals who struggle with drug addiction and the broader community from the dangers associated with needle-sharing and improper disposal.

AB 396 requires facilities to keep record of and label each administered or collected needle with a unique serial code, report quarterly data to local health officers, and implement fines for needles found to be properly disposed of. Additionally, this bill will create the Needle and Syringe Disposal Fund to collect administered fines that would go to the Department of Public Health. Overall, AB 396 will help create a cleaner and safer California for all.

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