

Dear Senators Court, Fenberg, Hill, Marble, and Sonnenberg.

I submit this testimony in writing as I am unable to attend the hearing for SB40 in person and it is important enough to me to add my voice in support. My name is Jennifer Gross, I have resided in Denver for over 19 years, currently living in House District 8 and Senate District 33.

I write my words as someone who has been involved with people who use drugs for over 30 years, beginning as a 16 year old volunteering in the admissions office of a long term in patient rehab facility in New York City's East Village. In the mid 1990s I chose to attend the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine for a Master in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine specifically because they had the best acupuncture detox courses and internship opportunities of any school in the nation at that time. And during my 14 years of acupuncture practice I provided acupuncture in the Denver County Jail and, for several years, at Harm Reduction Action Center when it was still a drop in facility.

One thing I have learned since the summer of 1985 is that no matter what is decided in this hearing today, people using drugs via syringe won't stop simply because people in this room say that they should, and should have the will power to do so. In the meantime, what can we do to help keep the citizens of Colorado who do inject drugs safe, and as healthy as they can be, until they get to a point where they are ready to address their drug use.

But, I do not need to draw on my 30+ years of experience working with drug using communities to tell me why Safe Injection Facilities would be beneficial to all Coloradans. For 14 years I lived a block south of East Colfax in Capitol Hill. After just over 3 years living elsewhere, I moved to about 50 feet south of East Colfax a few blocks east of Colorado Boulevard, at an intersection with a traffic light and bus stop. Do you know what I did not see when I moved in, and in the nearly 2 years since despite a decent amount of transient traffic? Used syringes. None. That is a great start, but just think about how in addition to reducing the number of syringes left around the city, we can now reduce the number of medical crises that arise from shooting up in dirty, hidden, and unsafe places. Imagine the reduction of overdoses, infections, abscesses showing up in Emergency Rooms around the metro area, and state? How many fewer people might end up passing out in alleyways and other tucked away spaces, vulnerable to all sorts of external harms?

So, I ask that each Senator give this bill serious consideration, and think about what they would wish to be offered to them should they ever find themselves in need where there is an obvious, yet radical, solution.