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City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor
Seattle LGBTQ Commission

TO: King County Council
FROM: City of Seattle LGBTQ Commission
DATE: May 23, 2017
SUBJECT: Support for Safe Consumption Sites

Dear Honorable Council Members,

On January 23, 2017, we submitted this letter of support for Safe Consumption Sites to Executive Dow Constantine and did not receive a response. In light of ongoing public debate over safe consumption sites, we, the City of Seattle LGBTQ Commission, are re-sending our letter to affirm the critical need for these sites in our community. We thank you for your continued commitment to this necessary public health intervention.

We are writing in support of the Heroin and Prescription Opiate Task Force's recommendation to establish a pilot program for Community Health Engagement Locations (CHEL sites). We encourage the City and County to work together to take all necessary steps to establish such sites in partnership with appropriate service providers. These sites reduce HIV and viral hepatitis transmission and overdose deaths, promote access to chemical dependency treatment and other supportive care, and increase public safety.

The war on drugs, historic approaches to addiction treatment, and the current opiate epidemic have been devastating for LGBTQ communities, particularly LGBTQ communities of color. Distrust of the treatment system due to past experiences of discrimination and stigmas surrounding addiction compound inequalities that LGBTQ individuals face when accessing resources. Moreover, members of these communities often lack the resources and social support networks to access treatment systems.

The lives of LGBTQ people who use drugs matter. Supervised drug consumption facilities will save lives by preventing overdose and HIV transmission, and are a necessary public health intervention to reducing the harms of drug use and the impacts it has had on our community. Numerous peer-reviewed, scientific studies have proven these positive effects. We stand behind the Task Force's recommendation to pilot safe consumption spaces in Seattle and King County.

Sincerely,

Hannah Johnson

On behalf of the City of Seattle LGBTQ Commission