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City Council Votes to Allow
Pharmacies to Sell Syringes Without Prescription

Los Angeles– The Los Angeles City Council on Wednesday voted to approve the California Senate Bill SB 1159 (Vasconcellos); also known as the Disease Prevention Demonstration Project (DPDP). This legislation allows pharmacies to sell or furnish 10 or fewer hypodermic syringes to adults without a prescription if the pharmacy is registered with the local health department.

The purpose of DPDP is to prevent the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C due to syringe sharing. Nationally, more than half of all Hepatitis C cases, and more than a quarter of all HIV cases occur among injection drug users, their partners or children. In Los Angeles the HIV epidemic is particularly devastating among communities of color. The largest proportion of recent HIV diagnoses in the City of Los Angeles are among Latinos, and while African Americans make up approximately 11% of the City's population, they account for approximately 25% of new HIV diagnoses.

Pharmacy participation in the Disease Prevention Demonstration Project (DPDP) is on a voluntary basis. Pharmacies that choose to participate will be required to provide written information or verbal counseling on how to access drug treatment, how to access testing and treatment for HIV and Hepatitis C, and safe disposal of syringes.

SB 1159 was co-sponsored by the California Medical Association, the Health Officers Association of California, the California Nurses Association, the American Liver Foundation, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Walgreen's. Major pharmacy chains are supportive partners in this public health intervention and initial discussions with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services indicate a strong interest in cooperating to implement this program in the City of Los Angeles.

Contra Costa, San Francisco and Yuba Counties have already authorized implementation of SB 1159.

The City of Los Angeles AIDS Coordinator's Office is committed to developing and supporting programs and policies that prevent the transmission of the HIV virus and that improve quality of life for people living with HIV and AIDS in the City of Los Angeles.

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