



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SEP 30 2018

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 186 without my signature.

This bill authorizes the City and County of San Francisco to approve “overdose prevention programs,” including the establishment of centers where illegal drugs can be injected under sanitary conditions.

The supporters of this bill believe these “injection centers” will have positive impacts, including the reduction of deaths, disease and infections resulting from drug use. Other authorities—including law enforcement, drug court judges and some who provide rehabilitative treatment—strongly disagree that the “harm reduction” approach envisioned by AB 186 is beneficial.

After great reflection, I conclude that the disadvantages of this bill far outweigh the possible benefits.

Fundamentally, I do not believe that enabling illegal drug use in government sponsored injection centers—with no corresponding requirement that the user undergo treatment—will reduce drug addiction.

In addition, although this bill creates immunity under state law, it can’t create such immunity under federal law. In fact, the United States Attorney General has already threatened prosecution and it would be irresponsible to expose local officials and health care professionals to potential federal criminal charges.

Our paramount goal must be to reduce the use of illegal drugs and opioids that daily enslaves human beings and wreaks havoc in our communities. California has never had enough drug treatment programs and does not have enough now. Residential, outpatient and case management—all are needed, voluntarily undertaken or coercively imposed by our courts. Both incentives and sanctions are needed. One without the other is futile.

There is no silver bullet, quick fix or piecemeal approach that will work. A comprehensive effort at the state and local level is required. Fortunately, under the Affordable Care Act, California now has federal money to support a much expanded system of care for the addicted. That's the route we should follow: involving many parties and many elements in a thoroughly integrated undertaking.

I repeat, enabling illegal and destructive drug use will never work. The community must have the authority and the laws to require compassionate but effective and mandatory treatment. AB 186 is all carrot and no stick.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edmund G. Brown Jr.", with a large, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the right.

Edmund G. Brown Jr.