March 21st, 2023


I am submitting testimony asking that provisions be introduced to ensure that our state’s response to the opioid crisis includes community input, is transparent, and is respectful to underserved communities. Specifically, I would ask the following:

1. Our drug-free zone laws be amended to include methadone clinics and safe-use injection sites.
2. There be a public hearing mandated by law before safe-use injection sites are opened in any municipality,
3. There be a public hearing mandated by law for any planned methadone clinic before receiving its state license to operate.
4. There be a public hearing on the state’s response to the opioid crisis in New Haven, at John Daniels school.

Our state needs to reconcile with the uncoordinated and poorly planned response to the opioid crisis. This is most evident in New Haven, where we have a major methadone clinic with documented incidents of nearby drug dealing and violence 330 feet from an elementary and middle school.

New Haven has also had a methadone treatment organization purchase property for expansion in an underserved Black residential neighborhood, and neither the organization nor our city administration thought to inform residents or even the local Alder.

We desperately need an open conversation on best practices when dealing with the opioid epidemic. This is even more pressing as cities across the U.S. (and from what I have heard, New Haven city government) plan safe-use injection sites, where cities establish a penalty-free zone for injecting opioids. That is why I am calling more community discussion before these decisions are made, and I am calling for common sense laws that protect the safety of schools and children.

Legislators should hear from our New Haven residents, particularly those in underserved communities of color, on how they have been left out of the conversation on where methadone clinics and safe-use injection sites are decided. Our legislators should hear from our academic
community and clinical staff about effective practices in ensuring that methadone clinics are well-run, orderly, and beneficial to their inhabited community.

I am calling on our state legislators to hold a public hearing in New Haven to discuss these issues in our public health response to the opioid epidemic. I fundamentally do not believe that we can only have one or the other – public health or respect for underserved communities. I also believe that we need to discuss how a regional problem must be addressed at a regional level and not by concentrating services in urban centers and leaving those cities to bear the burden of unforeseen consequences.

Sincerely yours,

Tom Goldenberg

Cc: Connecticut Public Health Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD., New Haven state delegation