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VACON: Needle Exchange Hurting Public Safety in Holyoke

Holyoke, MA. Today Holyoke Ward 5 City Councilor Linda Vacon announced that she will continue to fight the needle exchange program.

"We need to keep our streets safe. Unfortunately, the needle exchange program that costs taxpayers over \$150,000 annually, acts like a magnet and is bringing more problems into our community. While no one wants to see people addicted to drugs and our community wants to help them, this program has made our city less safe," said Vacon. "This is a major quality of life issue in Holyoke. People are sick and tired of seeing needles on our sidewalks. Used needles are bio-hazardous waste and a public health hazard." The people of Holyoke have voted against the needle exchange program. Vacon believes that it is important that our city councilors respect the wishes of voters. On the other hand her opponent has been silent on the issue-refusing to state a position.

"On the City Council, people can count on me to respect their wishes and fight to keep our streets safe," said Vacon. "My opponent owes it to the people of Holyoke to state his position on this critical issue."

"This is an important issue for the future of Holyoke and our families. Despite spending all these tax dollars we have not seen a decrease in usage and we are still experiencing the other crime associated with drug usage. It is time to respect the voters and end this dangerous program," said Vacon.

Speakers at the Board of Health meeting prior to the implementation of the illegal needle exchange by our current Mayor made assumptions about the success of the needle exchange programs reducing Hepatitis C and AIDS. Scientific studies have shown these assumptions do not hold true. See the Dr. Lucy Sullivan, 1997 study that states "there is no sign of an impact on the rate of decline (of HIV incidence rates) with the introduction of needle distribution in 1992." Also see the Vancouver study by Strathdee, 1997 showing an increase in HIV among drug addicts using needles. Then there is the Montreal study Bruneau J et al, 1995, showing that drug users participating in the needle exchange program were twice as likely to become infected with HIV as those who did not participate.

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