

Massachusetts bans vaping while moving a step closer to safe injection sites

In reaction to vape related illnesses and deaths, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker implemented a four-month ban on all vape products last Tuesday. The following week **Massachusetts legislators moved a step closer to implementing “harm reduction sites” a.k.a safe injection sites** where people with “substance use disorder” a.k.a. addicts can shoot up heroin and other controlled substances under the watch of medical professionals. The goal is to prevent overdose deaths, but there are at least two problems with the move.

First, U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling, the top federal prosecutor in Massachusetts, has already gone on record to oppose safe injection sites and has **stated he would prosecute the employees and users**. While the U.S Government seems to be taking a relaxed stance with states legalizing marijuana, they are taking a hardline approach with safe injection sites.

Second, Massachusetts legislators will be putting taxpayers at risk because it will be the taxpayer who becomes liable should a person suffer a fatal overdose in a safe injection site. As currently written in the bill, “a person with a substance use disorder may consume pre-obtained controlled substances.” This means an addict will be allowed to bring in their own drugs.

What if a person shoots up a spiked shot of heroin containing fentanyl or carfentanyl? Or a person who has been clean for months or years, relapses and takes a shot much too powerful for them? Fentanyl was responsible for 93% of all overdose deaths in Massachusetts so far in 2019. Narcan is a life-saving drug but has a reduced effect on fentanyl or carfentanyl. Nothing is certain when it comes to overdoses and

it will be a matter of time before someone dies and the family sues the Massachusetts taxpayer. In Massachusetts, we love lawsuits more than we love our opioids.

There is no arguing that the government should do more to reduce overdose deaths in Massachusetts. Overdoses kill more people than cars and guns combined, but safe injections sites aren't the answer at this time – not with a terribly written, two-page bill that puts taxpayers at risk.

Massachusetts elected officials also send mixed messages when they ban vaping one week and then talk about setting up safe injection sites a week later. Maybe set up safe vaping sites first?