

California State Senate

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SENATOR
STEVEN S. CHOI, PH.D.
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PROTECTION AND ENERGY

September 26, 2025

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Veto Request: AB 309 (Zbur) – Hypodermic Needles and Syringes

Dear Governor Newsom,

I respectfully request your veto of Assembly Bill 309, which would permanently allow unlimited access to syringes with no prescription required.

Although AB 309 is framed as a bill that is pro-public health, eliminating the January 1, 2026 sunset date removes a key accountability mechanism that would allow the Legislature to review and evaluate the effectiveness and community impacts of this public health policy. Additionally, this bill may unintentionally encourage ongoing substance abuse rather than guiding individuals towards necessary treatment and recovery services.

In my district, the Orange County Needle Exchange Program (OCNEP) was in operation from 2016 to 2018, and offered a “one-for-one plus 20” exchange on syringes, meaning that a person could deposit one dirty syringe, and get 21 clean syringes in return. Despite free syringe disposal services, when it was time to reauthorize the program, it was revealed that the Harm Reduction Institute projected that approximately only 60% of all distributed needles would be collected.

The Orange County Sheriff’s Department saw the lack of collected needles firsthand, as the Department conducted a cleanup of the Santa Ana Riverbed in 2018, in which more than 14,000 improperly disposed needles were found. Without specifying a plan for collecting the syringes out in public spaces where they are frequently disposed of by individuals under the influence of controlled substances, local agencies will ultimately be responsible for the cleanup of the syringes, as well as the behavior and mental health implications of the substances these syringes will inject into their bodies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your veto of SB 309. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (916) 651-4037. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steven Choi".

Senator Steven Choi, Ph.D.
37th Senate District