

Mass. Senate debates needle law

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Massachusetts state senators are debating a bill that would legalize over-the-counter sales of hypodermic needles.

The bill, which is intended to stem the spread of HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-borne infections through dirty needles, has already been approved by the state House, the Boston Globe reported.

Opponents say the measure will promote drug use by making it more convenient for addicts to obtain needles.

The House version of the bill would allow anyone 18 or older to buy a syringe from a pharmacy without a prescription. It also would decriminalize possession of a hypodermic needle, currently a misdemeanor in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health says 39 percent of the nearly 15,000 people in Massachusetts with HIV say they were infected because they or their partners used a dirty needle, the newspaper said.

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