



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

January 25, 2019

Steve Banks
Commissioner of NYC
Department of Homeless Services
33 Beaver Street, 17th floor
New York, NY 10004

RE: Resolution in support of the WH CORNER Project and calling on the MTA to install “Sharps” Containers in Subway Station Bathroom.

Dear Commissioner Banks:

At our General Meeting on January 22, 2019, Community Board 12-Manhattan passed the following resolution with a vote of 37 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstention, 0 not voting, supporting the use of syringe collection kiosks in public parks that are maintained by the CORNER Project as an effective, evidence-based harm reduction best practice and calling on MTA New York City Transit to install syringe collection boxes or other approved containers for sharps in subway bathrooms.

Whereas: The Washington Heights CORNER (Community Outreach Needle Exchange and Harm Reduction) Project’s mission is to improve the health and quality of life of people who use drugs by helping to overcome stigma and systemic barriers to care; providing access to clean syringes, and offering resources, advocacy and a broad range of educational, health and referral services to reduce risks associated with drug use, including HIV, hepatitis and overdoses; and

Whereas: The CORNER Project reports that it has exchanged tens of thousands of needles, provided naloxone intervention trainings to thousands of people and saved scores of lives by reversing intravenous drug overdoses; and

Whereas: The CORNER Project works with the Parks Department, the NYPD and the Department of Sanitation, and has attempted to work with MTA New York City Transit, to remove “sharps” (syringes and needles) from parks and other public places where drug users are known to congregate and use drugs, and has recovered and safely disposed of hundreds of thousands of sharps from various public places; and

Whereas: Safe disposal of sharps is critically important to optimize overall health, safety and protection of the environment. The best way to ensure that people are protected from potential injury or disease transmission of blood-borne diseases due to needle sticks is to follow established guidelines for the proper containment and disposal of sharps; and

Whereas: The New York State Department of Health has an Alternative Sharps Collection Program to provide for the placement of public disposal sites. All hospitals and nursing homes in the state are mandated by law to accept home-generated sharps as a free community service. In addition, pharmacies, health clinics, community-based organizations, mobile van programs, public transportation facilities, housing projects, police stations and other venues have drop boxes to facilitate the safe collection of used sharps, and the N.Y. State Thruway has had such collection bins in its bathrooms for years; and

Whereas: Sharps collection kiosks have proven to be successful in public parks in Washington Heights and The Bronx as well as in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Buffalo and other places throughout the country, reducing the number of used needles otherwise left in public places where they pose a clear public health hazard; and

Whereas: The CORNER Project lost the lease on its office space on the second floor at 566 W. 181st St. last August and since then has been providing services at mobile vans parked at the northwest corner of W. 181st St. and St. Nicholas Ave. as well as outside Holyrood Church and Highbridge Park; and

Whereas: A recent spate of unfavorable press coverage of the CORNER Project erroneously attributed the increase in IV drug activity in and around the 181st Street #1-train station to the presence of the CORNER Project's mobile van rather than the loss of its indoor facility, and was further exacerbated by a lack of understanding of evidence-based harm reduction practices; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan reiterates its support of the CORNER Project and calls on our elected officials to work with the community and local commercial landlords to find another suitable brick-and-mortar site for the CORNER Project within CB12's district and to help fund any necessary renovations; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan supports the use of syringe collection kiosks in public parks that are maintained by the CORNER Project as an effective, evidence-based harm reduction best practice; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls on MTA New York City Transit to install syringe collection boxes or other approved containers for sharps in subway bathrooms, piloting such a program at a minimum at the 181st Street #1-train and to partner with the CORNER Project to fund the staffing of the bathroom in that station to ensure public safety and to maintain it for the use of the general public.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Lewis
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Office of Public Advocate
Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congress Member
Hon. Fernando Ferrer, Acting Chairman MTA
Hon. Andy Byford, President MTA
Liz Evans, Executive Director of The Corner Project

Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Howard Zucker, Commissioner, NYS DOH
Hon. Ann Marie Sullivan, Commissioner NYS OMH
Hon. Inspector Reymundo Mundo, 34th PCT
NCO Brian Shevitz, Transit District 3
NCO William Batz, Transit District 3