

Subject: Immediate Release: Members of Charleston City Council Public Safety Committee release SURVEY on Harm Reduction to First Responders & Essential Workers

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bruce King

**Members of the Charleston City Council Public Safety Committee
release First Responder & Essential Worker
survey results about Harm Reduction Programs**

Charleston, WV – Members of the Charleston City Council Public Safety Committee release the results of a recent comprehensive survey of the employees of the Charleston Police Department, Charleston Fire Department, Charleston Refuse Department, and Charleston Public Grounds Department. The anonymous survey of those departments' employees concluded Friday, 03/12/21. The survey was made available to all members of those departments. Questions 11 and 12 allowed for comments which are included with the surveys. Complete survey results were made available to all Public Safety Committee Members on Saturday morning by the City Clerk's Office.

The results of the survey are below:

- 86.76% of respondents do not believe the Health Department's Needle Program was good for the City of Charleston
- 83.09% of respondents believe the Health Department's Needle Program led to an increase in crime
- 89.71% of respondents believe Needle Programs increase the likelihood of an accidental needle prick for the public at large, Refuse employees, or First Responders performing their job duties
- 89.71% of respondents believe that Needle Programs increase syringe litter throughout the community
- 83.09% of respondents believe that Needle Programs result in an increase in the number of intravenous drug users coming into the City of Charleston from outside areas
- 88.97% of respondents believe participants in a needle program should be required to meet with a medical professional during each visit to the program

- 91.91% of respondents believe participants in a needle exchange program should be required to return their used needles to receive new ones
- 83.82% of respondents do not believe additional needs programs are needed in the City of Charleston
- 52.21% of respondents have not been asked for their opinion regarding needle exchange programs in the City of Charleston
- 16.91% of respondents have been stuck by a needle in the course of their work with the City of Charleston
- 77.94% of respondents know how to properly handle syringe litter

City Council Public Safety Committee Member Bruce King issued the following statement:

"The results of this survey are clear and emphatic. Our First Responders are overwhelmingly against needle programs. It's also clear, based on many of the comments, that our first responders are compassionate and caring towards those struggling with drug addiction."

City Council Public Safety Committee Member Shannon Snodgrass:

"I want to thank the First Responders, Refuse, and Public Grounds employees for their service. We, as citizens, all entrust our lives and safety to our First Responders, so I am in hopes we listen to them now. It is loud and clear our first responders believe that needle programs are bad for Charleston. If City Council and Administration ignore the results of this survey and support needle distributions without accountability measures suggested then they have ignored our First Responders, which would be abhorrent and irresponsible."

City Council Public Safety Committee Member Pat Jones issued the following statement:

"How can you not stand behind the voices of our city's First Responders and workers? I've always supported them and will continue. These are the very people the city government has rightfully touted as heroes during the pandemic. Surely we are going to listen to them now."

For additional survey information, please contact Bruce King, Charleston City Council Public Safety Committee member.