Justice Department Files Lawsuit against Supervised Injection Facility in Philadelphia

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A city effort to open a facility in Philadelphia that allows users to take illicit drugs while under medical supervision has been challenged in court. While the goal is to prevent fatal drug overdoses by supervising abusers, the federal government has filed a lawsuit to prevent the facility from being opened. In the midst of an opioid epidemic that is affecting the nation, the lawsuit sets up a court battle over whether such facilities violate federal law or save lives.

Safehouse, a nonprofit organization that planned to open what is known as a supervised injection facility in Philadelphia, has been sued by the Justice Department. The facilities will allow illicit drug abuse but will also monitor users closely, giving them immediate help in the event of an overdose or an adverse reaction.

This idea has gained traction elsewhere, including New York, Seattle, and San Francisco. However, this has not yet resulted in official facilities for illicit drug use.

Philadelphia leaders have acknowledged the idea, and the city is the closest to opening one. The city?s district attorney even said that he would not prosecute those who operate this type of facility, as well as those

who use drugs there.

Every year more and more people are dying from an opioid-related overdose. Advocates believe that such drug sanctuaries could serve as a tool in fighting the opioid crisis. Philadelphia has one of the country?s most active heroin markets. It has also seen a high toll from opioid abuse.

Advocates also point to other countries where such supervised injection facilities exist. They believe lives could be saved by allowing drug users to use illicit substances in sanitary conditions, where they are monitored for signs of overdose rather than overdosing on the street, where help might not be available. Advocates also believe that these facilities can help reduce the spread of HIV and hepatitis C by limiting needle sharing.

The Justice Department, on the other hand, has vowed to crack down on cities that open the facilities. William M. McSwain, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, claims that Safehouse would violate federal law by allowing the supervised use of illegal drugs. McSwain argued in court documents that opening the facility would violate the Controlled Substances Act. The facilities appear to violate a portion of the law aimed at crack houses that criminalized opening or running places where illegal drugs are knowingly used.

McSwain said research into safe injection facilities might not apply to the situation in Philadelphia. ?For purposes of this action, it does not matter that Safehouse claims good intentions in fighting the opioid epidemic,? McSwain wrote.

Safehouse, however, said it will continue to move forward to open the facility, which it believes will be critical to saving lives in Philadelphia. ?We respectfully disagree with the Department of Justice?s view of the ?crack house? statute,? said Ilana Eisenstein, a lawyer for Safehouse. ?We are committed to defending Safehouse?s effort to provide lifesaving care to those at risk of overdose through the creation of safe injection facilities.?

Many public health experts responded to the lawsuit with dismay, believing that the facilities can serve as one more tool against the stemming tide of overdose deaths. Click the link to see Atlanta's top rehab placement programs.

If somone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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