Needle Exchange Director Arrested for Drug Paraphernalia Charges in Cincinnati

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The director of the Cincinnati Exchange Project, one of the city's only legal syringe exchange programs, was recently arrested for allegedly having an uncapped needle and drug paraphernalia in her car, Cincinnati.com reports. Elizabeth "Libby" Harrison has since been released from jail and is pleading not guilty to the charges filed against her by local police.

Law enforcement officers involved in the case claim they found Harrison's car pulled off to the left side of the highway last Friday night and found her sleeping at the wheel. According to their report, officers later observed a syringe cap, a bottle cap, a piece of burnt cotton and an uncapped syringe after searching the car, along with thousands of syringes in plastic biohazard bins, which Harrison said she was transporting as part of her job. There were no drugs found in the car.

The police report also notes that throughout the incident, Harrison told officers that she suffers from hypoglycemia and had pulled over because she hadn't eaten all day and felt lightheaded. The harm reduction worker was later given a snack to eat at the scene and became responsive. Medics who were called in to help reported that her blood sugar had returned to normal before she was taken to a local jail.

At the time of her arrest, Harrison was driving her own vehicle instead of the van that is the Cincinnati Exchange Project's official mobile syringe exchange site because it was having mechanical issues. She also claimed to police that her car often becomes untidy when she is forced to use it to do her work instead of the much larger van. But police insisted on taking her in as part of a "better-safe-than-sorry" approach and later claimed that they found a suspicious-looking plastic baggie on the street near the car.

CEP has been operating as a legal syringe exchange in Ohio's largest city since 2014. The organization also offers testing for hepatitis C virus (HCV) and HIV, resources for addiction treatment and, when available, the overdose-reversing drug naloxone (known by its brand name, Narcan) to its clients.

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