



Phoenix City Hall
200 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003

May 5, 2026

Dear Members of the Phoenix City Council,

As members of street medicine, healthcare, and outreach teams serving people experiencing homelessness in communities across the United States, we write to be clear: the City of Phoenix's Safe Medical Treatment in Parks Ordinance (G-7467, Sec. 23-45), and the City's [proposed amendments](#) to this ordinance, will cause preventable illness and death for people who are unhoused. We urge the City Council to repeal it.

We write to share our shared concerns with this ordinance, including the following:

1. The ordinance will increase pressure on overwhelmed emergency systems.

Crises and emergencies increase when people with serious mental illness, severe physical conditions, and substance use disorders can no longer receive healthcare. Medical outreach serves to [prevent health emergencies](#), [provide stabilizing care post-crisis](#), and [decrease use of emergency services](#). Restricting medical outreach increases emergency department visits, ambulance utilization, and hospital admissions for preventable conditions. The ordinance reduces the ability of police and emergency responders to serve other Phoenix citizens by increasing wait times for life-saving care. Increased reliance on expensive city resources may equally restrict the budget for other city projects.

2. The ordinance undermines public health protections.

Outreach medicine plays an important public health role and frequently has funding from local public health departments. Outreach teams identify and treat infectious diseases, engage in contact tracing, facilitate vaccination, provide hygiene supplies, and distribute sharps containers that support safe disposal of used supplies. These efforts jointly decrease risk of communicable disease and increase safety for the entire community.

3. The ordinance will restrict a proven and necessary healthcare model.

Street medicine, mobile healthcare programs, and mobile syringe service programs (medical outreach) overcome barriers that prevent people living unsheltered from safely or reliably



accessing traditional healthcare settings. [Barriers](#), including lack of transportation, mobility challenges, lack of secure storage for possessions, competing survival priorities, and severe chronic illness, mean that clinic-based care alone cannot reach many of the people most in need of medical services. [Research](#) demonstrates that providing medical care for unhoused people in their lived environment improves access to care, increases engagement with treatment including mental health and substance use disorders, improves housing success, and supports improved health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Similarly, syringe service programs not only [decrease drug litter](#) but also decrease overdose deaths and increase connection to treatment.

4. The ordinance will increase risk for heat-related deaths in Phoenix.

As the hottest city in the US, Phoenix is known for hundreds of heat-related deaths among homeless people annually. Phoenix has already set heat records in 2026, and the number of people experiencing homelessness has grown while federal funding changes have resulted in approximately 1,000 fewer shelter beds citywide. Banning medical outreach in public spaces will likely result in preventable heat-related illnesses and deaths among all citizens and increase the burden on emergency services.

5. The ordinance violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and raises serious equity and disability concerns.

Under the ADA, cities are required to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure people with disabilities experiencing homelessness have equal access to services, shelters, and housing. Restricting access to outreach medical care effectively denies equal access to health services to people living unsheltered, [many of whom](#) have disabling mental illness, physical conditions, chronic disease, and substance use disorders. People living unsheltered already have a [10-fold increased risk of death](#) compared to housed individuals, even in settings in which street medicine and universal health insurance exists. Preventing access to outreach medicine may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and is likely to result in preventable deaths among people experiencing homelessness.

Finally, the Safe Medical Treatment in Parks Ordinance will not reduce citizen complaints about their neighbors who are homeless. Instead of directly addressing community concerns about cleanliness and safety, the ordinance will worsen conditions at the expense of homeless citizens' lives. We urge the City Council to repeal the ordinance and work with experts in homeless health care to develop evidence-based solutions that protect public health, maintain safe and accessible public spaces, and uphold the dignity of every Phoenix resident.

Sincerely,
[Signatories]