

# Senate Judiciary Committee

*Brendan Bunnell 271-4063*

**SB 556-FN**, including syringes and similar medical devices in the definition of special waste for purposes of solid waste management and making the disposal of such special waste a felony.

**Hearing Date:** January 27, 2026

**Time Opened:** 1:04 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 1:11 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gannon, Altschiller and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senators Abbas and Carson

**Bill Analysis:** This bill includes syringes and similar medical devices in the definition of special waste for purposes of solid waste management and makes improper disposal of such a felony.

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**Sponsors:**

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Lang

Sen. Pearl

Sen. Innis

Sen. Birdsell

Sen. Abbas

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**Who supports the bill:** Senator Keith Murphy, Senator Dan Innis, and John Poulos.

**Who opposes the bill:** Robin Oates, Nancy Biederman, Cathy Stratton, John Klunk, Amy Watson, Eric Kropp, Nancy Husarik, Frances Lim-Liberty, and Kent Powell

**Who is neutral on the bill:** None.

**Summary of testimony presented:**

**Senator Murphy (SD-16)**, explained that this bill would address a critical issue in both his constituency of North Manchester and in the city as a whole. He introduced SB 556 which would seek to make it a felony to improperly dispose of syringes and other similar medical items and to reclassify those items as “special waste” for the purposes of waste management.

- Explained that the city of Manchester has been experiencing an ongoing issue with the disposal of needles and other contaminated medical items in public places. He stated that these items have been found in various locations including on streets, sidewalks, in gutters, and around playgrounds.

- Presented a series of photographs to the committee, all of which he himself had taken while on a walk last year. They documented the presence of needles on and near public walkways and roads. In some cases, these needles were accompanied by other equipment, like spoons and rubber bands, that would be sufficient to engage in dangerous and illegal purposes.
- Explained that he had looked into the issue and found that there are organizations in Manchester that are responsible for handing out, on average, 1,450 needles a day. He stated that there are similar organizations active in other areas like Rochester, Dover, and Concord.
- Stated that he sees these items in Manchester every day, and that his constituents are tired of having to deal with this issue in public areas like playgrounds. He explained that he understood that the organizations that supply these items only intend to improve the safety of individuals that use them, but that they were also dangerous for those members of communities that see them in public places.
- Explained that while there was another bill in this session aimed at this issue, the current bill sought to make it a Class B felony for individuals to improperly dispose of medical waste, whereas it currently is only a felony for a company or non-natural person. He explained that the current penalty for an individual incorrectly disposing of medical waste was a misdemeanor.
- Questioned why, hypothetically, it would not be a felony for an individual to scatter used needles in a public place like the State House. He explained that these used needles were dangerous items; often contaminated with bodily fluids and drugs.
- Senator Altschiller sought to clarify the definition of “special waste” within the context of the bill. She asked whether other contaminated items like diapers would be included within that definition.
  - Senator Murphy responded that if diapers were not currently included in the definition of “special waste”, this bill would not alter their status as waste or potentially cause a felony charge for their disposal. He explained that “special waste” is defined as any item consisting of medical or infectious waste, and that this bill sought, in lines four through five, to specify used and unused syringes and similar medical devices within that definition.
- Senator Gannon asked whether this bill would apply to individuals who were under the influence of a drug and unaware that they had wrongfully disposed of syringes in a public place.

- Senator Murphy pointed out one photo that showed a large quantity of needles; explaining that it was likely left by a group of individuals that had used the items before leaving them behind on the ground. He stated that he did not believe that being under the influence of a drug was a sufficient excuse to absolve an individual of wrongfully disposing of such items. He pointed out that being under the influence of a drug was an insufficient excuse in other circumstances, including driving while under the influence of alcohol.

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Date Hearing Report completed: January 28, 2026