



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

01/13/2025

Julie Burns
President & CEO
RIZE Massachusetts
101 Huntington Avenue
Suite 1300 MS 0103
Boston, MA 02199

Subject: Support for the Implementation of Public Health Vending Machines

Dear Ms. Burns,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed implementation of public health vending machines in Somerville. This initiative, aimed at enhancing access to health-related products and resources, is not only innovative but deeply necessary in addressing the health needs of our population in a more direct and accessible manner.

As Mayor of the City of Somerville I have observed firsthand the challenges that many community members face in accessing essential health supplies. From my professional experience and ongoing interactions with the community, it has become increasingly clear that conventional methods of distribution often fail to reach all segments of our population effectively.

The implementation of vending machines specifically tailored for public health can bridge this gap by offering:

1. **24/7 Availability and Enhanced Outreach:** These machines can provide around-the-clock access to essential health items such as first aid supplies, Narcan, and hygiene kits, which is crucial for those with non-standard work hours or limited transportation.
2. **Convenience and Anonymity:** For sensitive health needs, such as obtaining contraceptives or safe substance use resources, vending machines offer a discreet and stigma-free way for individuals to obtain what they need without fear of judgment or privacy concerns.
3. **Cost-Effective Distribution:** The machines' ability to operate 24/7 without direct human oversight minimizes labor costs and maximizes accessibility. The strategic placement of



these vending machines in high-traffic areas ensures that resources are utilized efficiently. This streamlined approach not only enhances public access to crucial health resources but also significantly reduces the economic burden on public health systems, making it a financially sustainable option for enhancing community health outcomes.

4. **Improved Health Outcomes and Reduced Emergency Department Visits:** By providing easy access to preventive measures and essential health products, these vending machines can help reduce the incidence of communicable diseases and support public health initiatives. By providing straightforward access to first aid supplies, these machines can decrease unnecessary emergency room visits for minor health issues, thus alleviating pressure on local healthcare facilities.
5. **Customization and Flexibility:** Vending machines can be stocked according to the specific needs and health challenges of our community. For example, during the colder months, the machines can be stocked with winter hats, gloves and socks. During the summer, the machines can provide sunscreen and/or water.

Our community stands at a crucial point where the decisions we make today can significantly influence our collective well-being. The deployment of public health vending machines represents a forward-thinking, practical solution that aligns with our commitment to public health and equality of access to healthcare resources. As such, the City of Somerville confirms its commitment to allocate \$30,000.00 of its opioid abatement funds to the Mosaic Municipal Matching Grant Program.

Thank you for considering this proposal. I am more than willing to engage further in discussions or to assist in the development and implementation of this initiative.

Sincerely,



Katjana Ballantyne
Mayor of Somerville