



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

May 10, 2019

Monica Bharel, MD, MPH  
Commissioner  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Commissioner Bharel:

Please accept this letter in opposition of Habit Opco Inc.'s application to relocate their Methadone Clinic within the City of Springfield.

Habit Opco, a for profit organization, currently has an application pending with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to relocate their Methadone Clinic from 2257 Main Street in the North End of Springfield to a plaza in the South End at the corner of Mill Street and East Columbus Ave.

On Monday, May 6, 2019, members of my administration sat down and listened to over 50 residents and businesses, including the South End Neighborhood Council and the South End Business Association, as they outlined their concerns about the potential relocation.

Upon review of neighborhood and community concerns, my administration, including our Health and Human Services Commissioner Helen R. Caulton-Harris, stand with our residents and businesses of the South End, Maple High Six Corners, and Lower Forest Park, in requesting that Habit Opco's application be denied by DPH.

My administration has been supportive of interventions, including Methadone Clinics, which assist individuals with substance use disorders. The City of Springfield has recently supported a Springfield based syringe access program too. Unfortunately, Habit Opco has used deceptive practices. Although the organization has been working on this move for over a year, their application was only recently filed with DPH. In a meeting with my Chief of Staff Tom Ashe and Health Commissioner Caulton-Harris on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, representatives from Habit Opco, including the Clinic Director, Gary Frankowski, informed them that Habit Opco has been working with the Regional Department of Public Health in Northampton on the relocation for quite some time. Commissioner Caulton-Harris and I are disappointed that

Northampton DPH officials did not value the City of Springfield enough to inform city officials of this potential change in operation that will greatly affect the city and our neighborhoods.

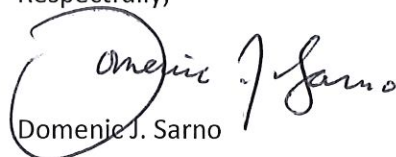
In addition, Habit Opco has suggested through media outlets that it did tell the city it was a methadone clinic; a claim our Springfield Building Commissioner denies.

The City of Springfield and in particular the neighborhoods, including the South End, which were devastated by the 2011 Tornado have shown their resiliency in rebuilding and redeveloping their homes and businesses. Habit Opco should have, at a minimum, asked to meet with the Neighborhood Councils, South End C3 Policing Initiative, and the South End Business Association to discuss their implementation strategy and receive feedback. There is also a methadone clinic less than half a mile away on Mill Street. This area is already oversaturated with these types of programs.

Also of note, we have continued to receive numerous complaints about Habit Opco's current North End site pertaining to management of operations by the residents, businesses and the church communities concerning traffic issues and disrespectful behaviors occurring at this location – this too must be address ASAP.

As Mayor of the City of Springfield, I ask that you take the concerns of the residents and businesses into consideration, and send a strong message to Habit Opco that if a public health intervention strategy is to be effective, it must include the voice of the city and community. Please deny this license. If you should need to discuss this matter in detail, please feel free to contact my Chief of Staff Tom Ashe at (413)787-6100 or by email [tashe@springfieldcityhall.com](mailto:tashe@springfieldcityhall.com).

Respectfully,

  
Domenie J. Sarno

*"This would be devastating to these neighborhoods!"*

cc: Charlie Baker, Governor  
Marylou Sudders, Secretary, EOHHS  
Senator James Welch  
State Representative Carlos Gonzalez  
City Councilor Melvin Edwards  
Health Commissioner Helen Caulton-Harris  
South End Citizen's Council Leo Florian  
Maple High Six Corners Neighborhood Council  
Forest Park Civic Association  
New North Citizens Council  
Acting Police Commissioner Cheryl Clapprood  
Building Commissioner Steve Desilets  
Chief Development Officer Kevin Kennedy