

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Secure Drug Take-Back Act Passes in Washington House

Bill addresses the tragedy of the opioid crisis in Washington State

OLYMPIA, WA— On Friday, the Washington House approved new secure medicine return legislation with an 86-12 bipartisan vote. The law (ESHB 1047) requires drug manufacturers to finance and coordinate a convenient and secure take-back system for unused medicines. When the program is launched, residents will be able to bring leftover prescription and over-the-counter drugs into their local pharmacies, hospitals and other places for safe disposal. In areas without collection sites, prepaid return mailers will be provided.

If this bill passes into law, it will be the first comprehensive drug take-back program in the nation that provided by the pharmaceutical industry. The measure now goes to the State Senate.

“We need this state law so that all residents of the State can have access,” said Representative Strom Peterson, prime sponsor of the bill. “Safe medicine return is a critical part of an ‘all of the above approach’ to fighting the opioid epidemic. I know first-hand the devastating effects losing someone to an opioid overdose has on a family. We’ve lost too many loved ones to opioid addiction.”

“We know cities and towns throughout Washington are struggling with the ugly impacts of the opioid epidemic on our communities,” said Peter King, Association of Washington Cities Chief Executive Officer. “A great part of house bill 1047 is that cities throughout the state will have support to provide at least one collection location, removing unneeded prescription drugs from our medicine cabinets and making our streets safer.”

The Secure Drug Take-Back Act is supported by a wide array of organizations, ranging from medical and suicide prevention groups to pharmacies and health centers to county and city associations.

“Washington dentists are committed to working with other health care organizations to help reduce the opioid epidemic that is harming families and communities around our state and across our country,” said the Washington State Dental Association’s President, Dr. Cynthia R. Pauley. “This legislation is an important, common-sense step that will help make a real difference in that work, and we commend the legislators and all the stakeholder groups who have come together to make it a reality.”

“Washington’s Drug Take Back bill is so important to reducing the toll of suicide and suicide attempts in our state, which cause mass devastation and cost our economy millions each year,” said Jennifer Stuber, Faculty and Policy Director, Forefront Suicide Prevention at the University of Washington.

“Nurses have supported local medicine take-back programs enacted in several counties, and we are so pleased to see this bill pass the House,” said Jan Bussert, President of the Washington State Nurses Association.

“Nurses know that patients and families need a safe and convenient way to dispose of unwanted and unused medications in communities across our state – and a statewide medicine take-back program will ensure every resident has access to this service.”

"This legislation has been one of our priorities for many years," added Priscilla Lisicich, President of the Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention. "So, we're really glad to see this bill moving, especially with such stakeholder support. From a prevention standpoint it only stands to reason that addictive or otherwise dangerous medicines left around the house are more likely to fall into the hands of youth. The many business, environmental and health interests around this measure have done well to help protect young people."

Similar local laws are already in place in King, Snohomish, Kitsap, Pierce, Clallam and Whatcom Counties requiring pharmaceutical manufacturers to provide a drug take-back program. The statewide law will expand access to the program to all residents of Washington.

Two programs have already gone into effect under these local laws in Snohomish and King counties. The programs in these counties are run by Med-Project, an organization which is financed by more than 400 participating drug manufacturers. In both counties, the MED-Project program has greatly expanded options for residents, providing convenient and secure drop boxes at drug stores, grocery stores with pharmacies, and medical clinics.

“For years, people have been told to flush their old medicines down the toilet,” said Heather Trim, Executive Director of Zero Waste Washington. “This law would allow residents across Washington to take-back their drugs and know that they are not impacting water quality or our wildlife.”

To find out more about the Secure Drug Take-back Act:

<http://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1047&Year=2018>

To learn more about existing programs in King and Snohomish counties: [MED-Project program](#)

Or view this short video about the MED-Project program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Po4EblbPr8>

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