

HB 3064

Secure Medicine Return

Concerns

Medicines save lives. When we are left with expired or unwanted drugs, however, there is growing concern that they be handled in a protective and safe manner. Drugs that accumulate in our medicine cabinets can contribute to accidental poisonings and illegitimate access that can lead to abuse. Much of the unwanted medicine that is flushed down toilets or thrown in the trash will end up in our surface or ground waters, potentially impacting aquatic organisms.



- **Accidental Poisonings:** Accidental poisonings increased 345% from 1990, most of them from medications. (Source: Unintentional Poisoning/Overdose Deaths in Washington, 6-12-07, Department of Health)
- **Drug Abuse:** Over half of the people using prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons obtained them from a friend or relative for free. (Source: National Survey On Drug Use and Health, 2006)
- **Our Environment:** Septic systems and wastewater and sewage treatment are not effective in eliminating the majority of medicines. Organic wastewater contaminants, including medicines, were found in 80% of 139 streams sampled in 30 states. (Source: U.S. Geological Survey, 2002)

Solution

The legislation will result in a cost-effective medicine return program that is convenient, safe and secure for residents throughout the state. Drug companies will pay for and implement “product stewardship programs” for the collection, transportation and disposal of unwanted drugs from residential sources, removing them from harm’s way.

Key Advantages

- Provides **effective collection** of unwanted medicines. In 2006, an industry-run and financed program in British Columbia collected 44,000 pounds of medicines at over 850 participating pharmacies. That program has operated for more than 10 years and is funded by an association of over 100 drug companies as a “cost of doing business.”
- Provides an **easy and safe** return program for residents throughout the state. Residents want and will use a safe way to dispose of their unwanted drugs. A pilot project at limited locations here in Washington is safely collecting 1.5 pounds per day per pharmacy of unwanted drugs from people’s homes.
- **No charge to residents** when returning medicines. The law will have negligible, if any, impacts on the price of medicines.
- **No new costs to local governments.**
- Medicine return becomes **part of doing business** for the producers, and the law will level the playing field by requiring that all producers participate.

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How It Will Work

- The legislation will establish a free, convenient and safe return program for expired and unwanted medicines from residential sources, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- By January 1, 2010, producers (drug companies) will establish and pay for a product stewardship program for the collection, transportation, and disposal of the medicines. Producers can meet this requirement independently or by coordinating with other producers.
- The program must be available to residents in every county of the state. The program will also be available to residential sources such as hospice services, nursing homes, boarding homes, and schools.
- Producers will determine how best to securely and conveniently collect the drugs. Retailers are not required to provide collection locations. However, based on the experience of a pilot project currently operating in Washington and a British Columbia program operating since 1996, it is expected that many pharmacies will be eager to become collection locations for a program provided by producers.
- Producers will set their own recovery goals for the first three years of the program. After that time, the Board of Pharmacy will set and enforce recovery rates.
- Medicines collected by a product stewardship program must be disposed at a properly permitted hazardous waste facility. If packaging delivered into the program along with unwanted medicines is then separated from the unwanted medicines, the program will maximize recycling of that packaging.
- Producers will inform the public about their program and prepare outreach materials for use by pharmacies and others. Pharmacies will also provide information to customers describing where and how to return unwanted drugs.
- To ensure secure handling of the medicines, the product stewardship programs will be reviewed, overseen, and enforced by the Board of Pharmacy. Producers must submit a product stewardship plan to the Board for approval, and must also submit annual reports. The Board will review plans in consultation with the Department of Ecology.



Supported by:

WA State Pharmacy Association · Bartell Drugs · WA Food Industry
WA Senior Citizens' Lobby · Children's Alliance · Breast Cancer Fund
Yakima County · King County · Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County
Coalition for Clean Water · WA Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
WA State Nurses Association · WA State Association of Occupational Health Nurses
WA State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization · Assoc. of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses
WashPIRG · Environment Washington · WA Organic Recycling Council
WA Citizens for Resource Conservation · People for Puget Sound