

Problem Statement

Unused medicines are causing public safety, public health, environmental concerns for Oregonians. While pharmaceutical companies profit from the over prescription, local governments are burdened with the costs and responsibilities associated with the collection, transportation and destruction of these medicines.

Background

Approximately 1/3 of the medicines purchased in America go unused. There are many reasons for this including overprescribing, over-purchasing, patient doesn't finish the meds, "Use As Needed" medicines expire before they are used and medications don't work and they are changed. Finally, end of life care involves many prescriptions including strong pain relievers and there are often many left over when the patient passes away. Having these unused medications can lead to a number of concerns:

Public health and Safety Concerns:

- Medicines are leading cause of unintentional injury deaths and are a common cause of poisonings/ER visits.
- 70% of those who abuse medicines obtain the drugs from family members or friends.
- Many teens think prescription drugs are safer to use than street drugs.
- Simply throwing away unused medicines is not safe; trash cans are not secure.
- FDA, DEA, EPA recommend secure medicine take-back as better than trash disposal.

Environmental Concerns:

- Improper disposal (flushing) contributes to pollution in waterways and water supplies.
- Medicines are dangerous or hazardous wastes and leachate from landfills ends up in the water system.
- Flushing does not work: treatment by septic or wastewater systems is not effective.

The current collection system relies on local governments to provide collection boxes in sheriffs or police stations and some pharmacies participating on a volunteer basis. The DEA also sponsors twice-a-year collection events. However, in jurisdictions that have instituted a more comprehensive program the volume of medicines collected increases by multiples.

Solution:

HB 2386/HB 2645 requires that pharmaceutical companies selling products in Oregon must create an "stewardship organization" that will collect, transport and dispose of unused medicines. The organization will have to develop a stewardship plan that meets state approved performance requirements that will include:

- convenient collection of all household medicines,
- protocols in compliance with DEA Rule and other applicable regulations,
- environmentally sound disposal,
- promotion and evaluation,
- deadlines for stewardship plan submission and program implementation, and
- enforcement and auditing mechanisms.

Costs

The costs, to be borne by the companies making sales in Oregon, have been estimated to be approximately 0.1% of annual medicine sales. These estimates are based on work done by PhRMA and other trade associations and by King County in 2013.

Put another way, program costs are about 1 penny per \$10 prescription of over-the-counter medicines sold.