

Senate Bill 727 (as proposed to be amended)

Solid Waste: Drug Abuse Prevention and Safe Disposal Program

Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson

SUMMARY

SB 727 would establish a pharmaceutical collection program to address the home storage and improper and illegal disposal of home-generated pharmaceuticals that has exacerbated concerns over increased drug abuse and impacts on water quality.

BACKGROUND

Some pharmaceuticals are banned from solid waste disposal sites and there are very few safe and convenient disposal options available to consumers. Serious social and environmental problems persist:

- The stockpiling of unused medications in the home allow for easier access for children and teens, thus fueling youth drug abuse. According to a National Institute on Drug Abuse-sponsored 2012 study by the University of Michigan, teens who abuse drugs are either obtaining them from friends or stealing them from friends or relatives without their knowledge. Researchers concluded, "...having leftover pills from an earlier prescription is a significant source for non-medically-supervised use."¹
- Poisoning is the fastest rising cause of accidental death among older adults, particularly from overdoses of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications.
- Unintentional poisoning of adults over 60 resulting in hospitalization increased by 43% in Alameda County from 1998 to 2006.
- Unused pharmaceuticals--like toxic waste--need to be kept out of the municipal waste stream because they can leach into groundwater.
- Flushing medications into sewage systems harms the environment and contaminates the water we drink. As with other hazardous chemicals, these drugs cannot be screened by most wastewater treatment processes, thus creating a buildup of these chemicals in California waterways.
- A 2010 Associated Press investigation found 9 medications in watersheds near Los Angeles, Riverside, and Long Beach, leading to increased public health concerns about bacterial resistance to antibiotics and endocrine disruption in aquatic organisms.

¹ <http://monitoringthefuture.org/data/12data.html#2012data-drugs>

- According to the National Association of Water Agencies, birth control products in waterways have interfered with endocrine function, leading to decreased reproductive success and declines in fish populations. Antibiotics pose the threat of killing microbes and disrupting the entire food chain.

Solution – SB 727

SB 727 is a pure Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy approach for home-generated pharmaceuticals. It would require the producers (manufacturers) of pharmaceuticals to develop and implement a collection system with oversight by CalRecycle, thereby establishing an effective and convenient collection program described in a stewardship plan and approved by CalRecycle.

Producers have the primary responsibility to design, operate and publicize a collection program for home-generated pharmaceutical products. Allowing the private sector to design and operate the program ensures it will be the most cost-effective and efficient system. SB 727 follows highly successful models in Canada and Europe that are very cost-effective and convenient programs for pharmaceuticals and hazardous and hard to handle waste, including, but not limited to: e-waste, paint, tires, batteries, compact fluorescent bulbs, sharps, mercury thermostats, and other mercury containing products. The bill also follows the efforts of Alameda County which recently became the first local government in the country to require producers of home-generated pharmaceuticals to develop and implement a collection system for the safe and proper disposal of these products.

SUPPORT

- California Product Stewardship Council (co-sponsor)
- Clean Water Action (co-sponsor)
- East Bay Municipal Utility District
- Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
- See attached for continued list of supporters

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