

August 10, 2020

Mr. Joshua S. Vinciguerra  
Director Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement  
New York State Department of Health  
150 Broadway Albany, NY 12204

**RE: Implementation of the Drug Take Back Act**

Dear Mr. Vinciguerra,

We, the undersigned coalition of environmental, product stewardship, public health, wastewater treatment, solid waste management, local government, and fishing organizations, write today with grave concerns about the slow pace of implementation of the Drug Take Back Act.

In November 2019, we provided comments (see attached) on the New York State Department of Health's ("the Department") proposed regulations for implementing the requirements of Article 2-B of the Public Health Law regarding the creation of a statewide drug take back program for the safe disposal of drugs.

At that time, we articulated concerns that the Department had missed several deadlines laid out in Chapter 120 laws for 2018. We identified as our first priority the expeditious implementation of this important program.

We appreciate, of course, that the global COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly its impact on New York State, has resulted in unprecedented strain on the Department. We also, however, recognize that the pandemic has exacerbated the opioid epidemic and highlighted the disproportionate impacts that communities of color face from pollution. Implementing the Drug Take Back Act will address both of these critical societal challenges by helping to reduce access to the unused prescription painkillers that too often engender addiction, and reduce the flushing of unused medications that pollute our waterways.

We request that the Department commit to finalizing the regulations necessary to implement the Drug Take Back Act within 30 days.

Sincerely,

Jill Jedlicka  
Executive Director  
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Brian Smith  
Associate Executive Director  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Barbara Warren RN, MS  
Executive Director  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition

Maureen Cunningham  
Senior Director for Clean Water  
Environmental Advocates NY

Chuck Godfrey  
Chairman, Environmental Committee  
Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's  
Clubs

Matt Civello  
Chair  
Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board

Patrick McClellan  
State Policy Director  
New York League of Conservation Voters

Andrew Radin  
Chair  
New York Product Stewardship Council

Larry Charette  
Chairman  
NYS Council of Trout Unlimited

Rob Weltner  
President  
Operation SPLASH

Scott Cassel  
Chief Executive Officer & Founder  
Product Stewardship Institute, Inc.

Dan Shapley  
Water Quality Program Director  
Riverkeeper

Roger Downs  
Conservation Director  
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Luann Meyer  
President  
Solid Waste Association of North America—  
New York State

Ed Gottlieb  
Tompkins County Coalition for Safe  
Medication Disposal

Carol Smith, MD, MPH  
Commissioner  
Ulster County Department of Health and  
Mental Health

Chuck Godfrey  
President  
WNY Trout Unlimited

cc: Hon. Aileen Gunther  
Hon. Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee  
Hon. Steve Englebright, Chair, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee  
Hon. Richard Gottfried, Chair, Assembly Health Committee  
Hon. Gustavo Rivera, Chair, Senate Health Committee  
Hon. Carl Heastie, Assembly Speaker  
Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Majority Leader  
Hon. Jen Metzger  
Kim Harriman, Acting Deputy Secretary for Energy and Environment  
Amanda Lefton, First Assistant Secretary for Energy & the Environment  
Jennifer Maglienti, Assistant Counsel to the Governor on Energy and Environment  
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NYSDEC  
Howard Zucker, Commissioner, NYSDOH