

New Law Will Require Pharmaceutical Companies to Pay For and Run Statewide Drug Take-Back Program



Oregon has joined five states with a new law that requires drug manufacturers to pay for and run a statewide drug take-back program. The law, signed by Gov. Kate Brown and championed by Rep. Sheri Schouten (D-Beaverton), is intended to provide free, convenient access to safe drug disposal in every community in Oregon.

The law takes effect in September 2019 and the program must be operational by July 1, 2021.

Unused medications can be dangerous, especially to children, seniors and pets, and they can lead to drug abuse, misuse and accidental poisonings. Disposing of unused medications down the drain or the toilet are not great options, because of the possibility that they can leak into the water supply or harm wildlife.

Under the new law, Oregon residents will be able to take unused drugs back to a pharmacy for safe, environmentally responsible disposal. Prepaid mail-back envelopes will also be available.

With the leadership of Representative Schouten, a broad coalition including the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, the League of Oregon Cities, and the Association of Oregon Counties spearheaded the effort to remove unused drugs from circulation.

DEQ's Senior Legislative Analyst, Abby Boudouris, shepherded the bill through the State Legislature. "Passing the drug take-back law required a remarkable collaborative effort," she said. "It's thanks to the support of such a diverse coalition that the bill was able to pass."

The coalition's work built on the foundation laid by the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI), a national nonprofit, which over the past 15 years has paved the way for the passage of drug take-back laws around the country. PSI led a national effort that changed the federal Controlled Substances Act and Drug Enforcement Administration regulations to allow convenient pharmacy collections.

Today, the organization coordinates state and local agencies around the country to share information and strategies, and supports drug take-back bills.

"This new law is a major victory for consumers. It is a critical strike against the prescription opioid crisis and will go a long way to protect our water quality," said Scott Cassel, CEO and founder of PSI. "It will remove a substantial financial and management burden from governments and taxpayers, placing the primary responsibility with the drug companies that put these products on the market and profit from them."

Oregon is the sixth state to require manufacturers to fund and safely manage drug take-back, preceded by Massachusetts, Vermont, Washington, New York, and California.

Want to support free, useful, locally produced journalism like this? Then consider joining our [monthly membership program, Canby Now Plus](#), for as little as \$1 a month! You'll help us sustain and expand our work, plus you can get access to exclusive content, cool merchandise and other goodies. Thanks!