



NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP ACTION COUNCIL

ADVOCATING FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS PASSES SAFE PHARMACEUTICAL DISPOSAL ORDINANCE WITH FRAMEWORK FOR PRODUCER-FUNDED PROGRAM

(**Sacramento, CA**) –Cook County in Illinois, representing more than 5 million residents, yesterday adopted an ordinance that established a medication take-back program to provide residents with a convenient way to safely dispose of unwanted medications. The ordinance seeks to expand an existing collection program administered by the Cook County Sheriff to provide safe, secure take-back sites in underserved areas of Cook County.

“I applaud Cook County for recognizing the importance of implementing safe medication collection programs,” said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the National Stewardship Action Council, which has been working with Cook County on the ordinance. “Seven counties in California as well as King and Snohomish Counties in Washington have passed ordinances with the objective of having a fair sharing of responsibility between government and pharmaceutical companies. Now we are seeing jurisdictions outside of the west coast tackle this issue with Cook County passing the 10th ordinance in the U.S.”

However, the ordinance differs from those adopted to date by not requiring that pharmaceutical companies pay for the program for well over a year nor provide convenient collection locations. Hence, the concerns raised by Executive Director Ed Paesel of the South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association, who stated at the hearing, “While we support the adoption of the ordinance, we urge the Board to closely monitor the ordinance as we have concerns that the registration fee will not be sufficient to cover the likely costs of the collection program. In addition, we believe that the Board should seek to add additional collection sites over time as the number proposed may not prove to be adequate to serve the residents of Cook County.”

Today, the flushing of medications contributes to pharmaceutical pollution in the environment. The amount of leftover and expired medications in American homes is significant – an estimated 30-40 percent goes unused. Medicine take-back programs are the most cost-effective and sustainable way to dispose of unwanted medications.

In fact, NSAC [facilitated a letter](#) that was signed by more than 120 individuals and organizations in January asking the Food and Drug Administration to end its “flush list” to keep medications out of the water system. So far, the FDA has failed to remove their recommendation to flush.

Because a safe medication collection program is a proven solution, more and more cities are drafting ordinances to provide a sustainable funding source by requiring pharmaceutical and needle manufacturers to design and fund convenient and safe take-back programs that would include an education component to ensure that the public is aware of their collection options. In addition, stakeholders such as Walgreens are stepping up to the plate. [Walgreens recently installed 500 medicine collection bins](#) in the U.S. with 20 in Cook County and should be applauded for leading the retailers in sharing responsibility for a safe take-back program. We hope more large retail pharmacies do the same.

Alameda County in California was the first in the nation to implement a medicine take-back ordinance in 2012.

However, while producer funded collection programs are no different than programs producers fund and operate [in countries all over the world](#) including [Canada](#), [Mexico](#), [Portugal](#), [Brazil](#) and even [Colombia](#), they continue to oppose proposed ordinances introduced in the U.S. including challenging the Alameda ordinance all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court denied PhRMA’s request to hear their case in May of 2015, paving the way for other communities in the nation to adopt ordinances of their own. All ordinances to date except one vote in Santa Barbara, have passed unanimously indicating the extent of local support. The drug industry was successful in lobbying Cook County to delay implementation of a fee to recover costs of the program until July 1, 2018.

Los Angeles County is scheduled to take up an EPR ordinance on both medicines and needles next Tuesday November 1, 2016 and more are being considered across the country.

National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC)

The National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC) is a powerful network of governments, non-government organizations, businesses, and individuals advocating for policies and projects where producers share in the responsibility for funding and managing problem products at end of life.

NSAC supports Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to conserve resources, reduce costs to local governments, create jobs in remanufacturing, and provide a circular economy. NSAC’s goal is to align public and private sectors through information and partnerships to implement and ensure sustainable recovery systems where producers have an appropriate level of sharing in the responsibility for those systems.