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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

### HB 3273B: Safe Drug Disposal

**The Problem:** Unused prescription drugs present significant public health, public safety, and ecological concerns. Medication, if not properly disposed of, can lead to abuse, accidental poisoning, or contamination of our waterways. Most municipal treatment processes cannot remove all environmentally harmful compounds that enter our water, and convenient drug disposal may reduce contamination of Oregon's waterways as fewer medications will be flushed down toilets, while removing unused pain killers from circulation can help combat addictions—80% of heroin users start by using prescription painkillers,<sup>1</sup> and 70% of individuals who abuse prescription drugs get them from their friends or family<sup>2</sup>—often by theft.

The high collection rates at DEA National Drug Take-Back Days in the spring and fall show the high demand for drug take-back programs; nearly 150,000 pounds of medicines have been collected in Oregon since 2010 at DEA-coordinated events.<sup>3</sup> However, Oregon's current system for collecting unwanted prescriptions relies heavily on local law enforcement agencies, instead of more convenient locations in hospitals and pharmacies. While law-enforcement take back events are important and useful, they are sporadic and inconvenient for many working families. Many Oregonians are completely unaware of these disposal opportunities, are uncomfortable with police stations, and are unable to dispose of their unwanted, unused, or expired drugs during normal business hours.

**The Solution:** HB 3273 would follow Washington, California, and New York in establishing a state-wide drug take back program to help Oregonians dispose of unused prescription and over-the-counter medications, at no cost to the state's general fund. Specifically, this concept would:

- Require pharmaceutical manufacturers selling medicines in Oregon to cover the costs of collection, transportation, safe destruction of collected medicines, program promotion, and administration.
- Include an outreach program to educate consumers on the safe and secure storage of medications, the risks of improperly storing and disposing of opioids or opiates, and discourage disposal of drugs in the garbage or sewer system; and
- Create a state-wide mail-back option at request of consumers.

#### Drug Take-Back Program Costs

- In King County, Washington MED-Project's annual report (2017) showed that their drug take back program served their 2.15 million residents at an annual cost of just \$0.76 per resident.
- At a similar cost per capita, Oregon could serve every town and city in the state for \$3.2 million, or 0.06% of the \$5.2 billion investment that drug manufacturers spent on direct to consumer advertisements in 2015 nationwide.
- The A-14 amendments specify that fees to fund the program will be assessed 50% by sales revenue and 50% by volume of pills sold in Oregon.

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<sup>1</sup> Nationally, four out of five (80%) of new heroin users started out misusing prescription painkillers.

Jones CM. Heroin use and heroin use risk behaviors among nonmedical users of prescription opioid pain relievers - United States, 2002-2004 and 2008-2010. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2013 Sep 1;132(1-2):95-100. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2013.01.007. Epub 2013 Feb 12

<sup>2</sup> 70% of those who abuse prescription medicines obtain the drugs from family members or friends, usually for free.

2011 and 2013 SAMHSA/NSDUH National Surveys on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings. The "about 70%" amount is a combination of those who get their prescription drugs for free from a friend or relative (54.2%) and those that bought/took the drugs from a friend or relative (16.6%) in 2011. <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/series/64>

<sup>3</sup> DEA National Rx Take-Back Day Results, <https://takebackday.dea.gov/#initiative-results>

