



NYPSC
NEW YORK PRODUCT
STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



**PRODUCT
STEWARDSHIP
INSTITUTE**
Sustainable Solutions to Protect Our Environment

July 19, 2017

Mary Jane Shimsky
Chair, Infrastructure Committee
Westchester County Legislature
148 Martine Ave # 800
White Plains, NY 10601

Honorable Chairwoman Shimsky and Committee Members:

We thank you for the opportunity to attend your committee meeting by phone and provide information on the County's pharmaceutical product stewardship ordinance under consideration. In addition to our oral testimony, we would like to submit this letter highlighting key points.

The New York Product Stewardship Council (NYPSC) and the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) strongly support the proposed legislation to establish a manufacturer financed and managed drug take-back program in Westchester County. This bill would create proper disposal options for unwanted and expired pharmaceuticals—both controlled and non-controlled substances—providing residents with a convenient way to safely remove unused medications from their homes.

We do want to point out that the provision requiring participation of retailers that have three or more locations could motivate pharmacy groups to oppose the bill. Our experience nationally indicates that pharmacies are generally willing to volunteer to host take-back programs as long as they are not being asked to cover the cost. They recognize the benefits: in addition to providing a community service, pharmacy-based take-back programs increase foot traffic in their stores and engender customer loyalty. Though your bill deviates in this one way from the key elements we recommended for extended producer responsibility laws, we nonetheless support the proposed ordinance and understand that mandatory retailer participation can work.

Producer-funded drug take-back programs save government and taxpayers money, fairly incorporate the true cost of managing these products in the purchase price, and provide a direct financial incentive for pharmaceutical companies to reduce unnecessary prescriptions. This funding mechanism is a key element to the sustainability and success of these programs. Based on our decade of work on this issue, we can say with certainty that **passing a pharmaceuticals stewardship bill will save the County hundreds of thousands of dollars by shifting the financial and management responsibility of safe household pharmaceutical waste disposal to drug manufacturers.**

Passing the proposed ordinance would also help protect human health and the environment. Mounting evidence demonstrates the need for secure medication disposal options that match the convenience of purchasing them. Pharmaceuticals improperly stored in the home or placed in the trash are leading to a growing number of accidental poisonings, especially among children, and are the primary starting supply for the majority of people now addicted to opioids in this country. A lack of safe disposal options contributes to the national drug abuse epidemic that is now the leading cause of injury death in the U.S.,

ahead of car accidents. Moreover, when flushed or thrown away, pharmaceuticals end up in waterways, harming the ecosystem and affecting sources of drinking water.

Drug take-back programs are considered the safest, most effective drug disposal solution by the [NY Department of Environmental Conservation](#), an increasing number of New York local government agencies (including [Rockland County](#)), and organizations such as the [Medical Society of the State of NY](#) and the [National Association of Counties](#). Unfortunately, the pharmaceutical industry continues to heavily promote trash disposal, leading to public confusion. Passing this ordinance would ensure that pharmaceutical manufacturers promotes the safest solution in Westchester County.

In the U.S., 18 local governments and 2 states (Massachusetts and Vermont) have already passed similar drug stewardship laws. Many other state and local governments have introduced similar legislation. Westchester County has a chance to stand among these leaders by taking this important step to address the opioid epidemic, accidental overdoses, and aquatic contamination.

We commend you for addressing NY State's drug abuse epidemic and protecting the environment by introducing the Westchester County Pharmaceutical Product Stewardship bill, which contains all of the key elements of an effective drug take-back ordinance.

Thank you for your strong leadership on this important issue. Feel free to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully,


Andrew Radin, Chair
New York Product Stewardship Council
(315) 295-0726; aradin@ocrra.org


Scott Cassel, Founder & CEO
Product Stewardship Institute
(617) 236-4822; scott@productstewardship.us

About PSI: PSI is a national nonprofit dedicated to reducing the health and environmental impacts of consumer products. We have 47 state government agency members and hundreds of local government agency members nationwide. PSI also has 110 formal partnerships with businesses, organizations, academic institutions, and non-U.S. governments. Our organization has been working on the issue of safe drug disposal for over a decade, including helping to improve the federal Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010 and subsequent Drug Enforcement Administration regulations in 2014, which allow retail pharmacies to become authorized collectors of controlled substances. These changes opened the door to significantly more convenient take back, which is a key factor in increasing the amount of medications collected. PSI works closely with NYPSC, which has made pharmaceuticals stewardship a priority issue.

About NYPSC: NYPSC works to implement the principles of product stewardship in NY State by providing leadership, guidance, and resources (including policies, evaluations, and educational tools) to individuals, organizations, institutions, local governments, the state legislature, elected officials, and manufacturers. NYPSC is made up of diverse experts including local and state government, waste management, recycling, and wastewater experts, environmental groups, public health organizations, and others with a stake in product stewardship. The organization educates all relevant stakeholders about the benefits of product stewardship, and provides a forum for the exchange of information regarding existing policies and programs. NYPSC has a Pharmaceuticals Committee that meets to coordinate efforts to promote new drug stewardship policies and programs.