

New York State Drug Take-Back Bill Becomes Law

New York – On July 10, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the [Drug Take-Back Act](#), which requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to finance and manage the safe collection and disposal of unused medications. The law, sponsored by Senator Hannon and Assemblywoman Gunther, requires pharmacies with ten or more U.S. locations to participate as drug collection sites to help ensure convenient access for residents. The law takes effect in 180 days. Program implementation will begin in mid-2019.

Unused medications accumulate in the home, where they are accessible to potential abusers and a danger to seniors, children, and pets. When improperly disposed down the drain or in the trash, unused drugs contaminate New York waterways and harm aquatic organisms. New York is the fourth state to require manufacturers to fund and safely manage drug take-back, preceded by Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington, along with 22 local governments throughout the U.S.

The new law designates the New York State Department of Health (DOH) to oversee the program. The DOH has authority to develop regulations for effective implementation. Notably, the legislation gives pharmacies and other collectors the option to use kiosks, mail-back, or "other" approved systems. Kiosks are the most convenient and cost-effective collection method and can be required by the DOH.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently released a [comprehensive assessment](#) that identified the need for a statewide manufacturer-funded program for consumers to safely dispose medications. The DEC is also conducting a two-year [drug take-back pilot program](#) with 246 retail pharmacies, hospitals, and long-term care facilities. The success of the pilot demonstrates that drug take-back is both possible and indispensable.

The Product Stewardship Institute (PSI), a national nonprofit, raised early awareness about the need for safe drug disposal and advised officials on the legislation and state pilot take-back program. "Passage of this law will remove a significant financial and management burden on government and place much of it on drug companies who put these products on the market," said Scott Cassel, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of PSI. "We now need to ensure that the program is effectively implemented so unwanted medications are taken out of homes and kept out of waterways."

Product stewardship experts from the New York Product Stewardship Council (NYPSC) rallied local and regional governments to support the bill and provided recommendations that ultimately improved it. "More than 2,000 people in New York State die annually from opioid overdose -- most commonly from prescription pain relievers," said Andrew Radin, NYPSC Chair and Recycling Director for Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency. "The passage of this law is a vital step forward to protect our families and communities."

Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) worked closely with NYPSC and PSI to lead the lobbying effort for the Drug Take-Back Act's passage. CCE's skillful and timely grassroots organizing brought together a diverse coalition to support the bill. "This landmark legislation provides safe, easy and free drug disposal options for the public. Safe disposal of unwanted drugs means cleaner, safer drinking water. Our summer ice tea should have lemon and honey, not trace amounts of Lipitor and antibiotics" said Brian Smith, Associate Executive Director of CCE. "We applaud the Governor and the state legislature for taking urgent action to protect our water and wildlife."

Many local governments throughout New York currently host annual one-day drug collection events. The permanent statewide program will enable residents to safely dispose drugs throughout the year. Stephen Acquario, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Counties, noted, "Counties support this statewide solution to stem the tide of the opioid epidemic and keep pharmaceuticals out of our water supplies without passing undue costs on to taxpayers."

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About the [Product Stewardship Institute \(PSI\)](#)

PSI is a national nonprofit that reduces the health, safety, and environmental impacts of consumer products with a strong focus on sustainable end-of-life management.

About the [New York Product Stewardship Council \(NYPSC\)](#)

NYPSC works to implement the principles of product stewardship in New York State and nationally by providing leadership, guidance, resources, and a forum for the exchange of information regarding existing policies and programs.

About the [Citizens Campaign for the Environment \(CCE\)](#)

Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) builds widespread citizen understanding and advocacy for policies designed to protect our natural resources and public health.