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A Department of the City and County of San Francisco



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## Press Release

### **FIVE BAY AREA COUNTIES URGE STATE BOARD TO ALLOW SAFE DRUG DISPOSAL PROGRAMS**

#### ***Board of Pharmacy to Vote on Regulations Which May Affect Local Implementation***

San Francisco, CA – In a joint letter released today, elected officials from five Bay Area counties called upon the California Board of Pharmacy to expedite approval of regulations that will allow chain and independent retail pharmacies to serve as “take back” locations for unwanted or unused medicines. The jurisdictions represented in the letter – Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Marin counties – have all passed ordinances that require the pharmaceutical industry to pay for retail pharmacies to host drug take back programs. However, the counties are currently awaiting regulatory direction from the state before local implementation can succeed.

“The Bay Area has been leading the way on drug take back and proper medicine disposal because we recognize that unwanted medications in the home can fuel addiction and poisonings, and when dumped in the sewer or trash, they pollute the environment,” said London Breed, President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and one of the signers of the letter. “After years of stakeholder meetings and a successful pilot program in San Francisco, we are ready to implement a permanent medicine disposal program that is safe, convenient, and reduces barriers to participation for our pharmacies and residents. That is why we need the state to act without delay.”

The California Board of Pharmacy is the state entity responsible for setting policy on the activities of pharmacists and the operation of retail pharmacies. Retail pharmacies sell the majority of home-used medications, and are a natural location to provide consumers with a “take back” disposal service. In their letter, the five counties raise concerns about the Board’s proposed regulations.

Several of the requirements – like prohibiting certain medications in “take back” receptacles – go beyond federal law and may discourage or even bar many pharmacies from hosting a medicine collection bin. In addition, the five counties are concerned about how the regulations might impact local government’s ability to require pharmacies to participate.

“It is our hope that the Board of Pharmacy will recognize safe disposal at retail pharmacies as an important way of keeping unwanted drugs out of the environment,” said Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment. “The Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has already set a high regulatory bar for pharmacies to collect all medicines. We are looking to the state to follow the lead of the DEA and ensure a practical and accessible system for local governments to implement these programs for the public’s benefit.”

“Local governments are responding to constituent demands for safer alternatives for disposing drugs,” said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council. “Pharmacies are the most important partners in making collection convenient and the Board of Pharmacy should encourage all pharmacies to participate.”

The elected officials who have signed on to the letter include Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley, San Francisco Board of Supervisors President London Breed, San Mateo County Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager, and Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice. The State Board of Pharmacy will consider the new regulations for the second time at their next public meeting on Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>.

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