

Patricia Hymanson
House District 4

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

I am Representative Patty Hymanson representing House District 4, parts of York, Wells, Sanford and all of Ogunquit.

I am speaking in favor of LD 8, An Act to Support Collection and Proper Disposal of Unwanted Drugs

As a neurologist in private practice on the Seacoast since 1988 up to 6 years ago when I closed my practice and ran for office, I have watched people be unsure of what they should do to dispose of unwanted medications. Some have kept them in overflowing drawers, flushed them, crushed them, trashed them, or brought them into my office.

Over the years, police stations have scheduled drug take-back days or bins in the stations with DEA agents driving the stock-piled unwanted meds to Mass. from York, as an example, to be incinerated. Some states have tried composting as an alternative to incineration. As a legislator I have tried to find a way for nursing facilities to ship individually wrapped unwanted meds to a charity pharmacy for distribution to those who can not afford meds but the logistics and staffing costs have not been favorable.

People can buy plastic packets called drug deactivation systems to empty pills, liquids or patches into, fill with water then dispose in the trash. These cost a person \$8 for a 90 pill container and the person has to know about them. Some are given out with certain prescriptions. The containers are called “environmentally friendly” by the manufacturer but are not environmentally safe.

These medications are bought by the consumer, are owned by the consumer but unlike other consumer purchases, how should the consumer be responsible in the manner they are thrown away? There has to be a system in place to let people know how to dispose of unwanted meds so they do not harm the public. Someone needs to pay for that education and disposal system. Right now, to my knowledge, it is the consumer, the government, and possibly some pharmacy chains who pay.

Unused prescriptions for drugs can lead to misuse, accidental poisoning, introduction of pharmaceuticals into water sources and potentially into drinking water. The unwanted product can harm and the cost of clean-up should be born by the responsible pharmaceutical companies with a standardized system with built-in accountability.

I would ask the committee to look at the Massachusetts, Washington and California programs, make sure the program is not written to be so cumbersome the program becomes a new problem and consider who should be the stewards of these products that create public harm.

Thank you for your consideration.