



**Testimony in Support of LD 8,
An Act To Support Collection and Proper Disposal of Unwanted Drugs**
Sarah Nichols, NRCM Sustainable Maine Director, February 17, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Sarah Nichols, and I am the Sustainable Maine Director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you in support of LD 8, which would help Mainers dispose of unused drugs safely and for free.

NRCM is a strong advocate of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs, which require producers to assume responsibility for the post-consumer recovery of their products. Such policies are a fair, appropriate, and effective way to manage problematic wastes. [Maine's Product Stewardship Framework law](#) lists five criteria to identify which product categories are prime candidates for a stewardship program; and while only meeting one of the criteria is sufficient, unused drugs fit all five.¹

During the 129th Legislature, NRCM worked with Senator Gratwick, industry experts, and pharmacists to develop language for LD 1460, the predecessor to LD 8. The ENR Committee held a public hearing on LD 1460 in the spring of 2019, held the bill over to 2020, and then amended the bill and reported it out of committee with unanimous support. Unfortunately, the Legislature's abrupt adjournment last spring prevented LD 1460 from being enacted into law. LD 8 is the exact same bill that was unanimously approved by the ENR Committee last year. We hope that you will similarly provide unanimous support for this bill this year.

And here's why—this bill would create a reliable, sustainable, and convenient statewide collection program for unused drugs, which has important benefits for Mainers. LD 8 would:

- Decrease the risk of accidental poisoning and drug overdoses by preventing unused medications, like opioids, from accumulating in homes and getting into the wrong hands;
- Offer an environmentally safe alternative to landfilling or flushing of unwanted drugs. Without a convenient and well-established alternative, pharmaceutical chemicals can accumulate in our waters through the wastewater treatment system or in landfill leachate and pose a serious threat to people and wildlife;
- Relieve Maine communities, law enforcement agencies, and others from the burden of organizing and staffing sporadic collection events for unused drugs, saving time and taxpayer money; and
- Provide a standard way that Maine people can dispose of unwanted drugs, so they know what disposal options are available throughout the year.

¹ A product category is a good candidate for a product stewardship program if one or more of the following criteria are met: A. The product or product category is found to contain toxics that pose the risk of an adverse impact to the environment or public health and safety; B. A product stewardship program for the product will increase the recovery of materials for reuse and recycling; C. A product stewardship program will reduce the costs of waste management to local governments and taxpayers; D. There is success in collecting and processing similar products in programs in other states or countries; and E. Existing voluntary product stewardship programs for the product in the State are not effective in achieving the policy of this chapter. <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/38/title38sec1772.html>

Six states have established successful producer-funded drug take back programs: MA, VT, WA, NY, OR, and CA. Twenty-three U.S. cities and counties have also done so. Managing these programs costs manufacturers only pennies on a prescription and does not increase medication costs for consumers.

For these reasons, we urge you to support LD 8. Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.