



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: March 1, 2023
RE: HB0517 Drug Manufacturers – Drug Take-Back Programs

(Take It Back Maryland Act)

The MLLC supports HB0517 Drug Manufacturers – Drug Take-Back Programs (Take It Back Maryland Act), 2023

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0517.

When unused medicines are dumped down the drain, it can have a devastating impact on the environment and wildlife; and when left in medicine cabinets, drugs can pose a hazard to our community and our families by causing accidental overdoses.¹ Drug take back programs safely and securely gather and dispose of unused or expired medicines and avoid harm to the environment as well as our communities. Communities of color and low-income communities in the United States are often disproportionately burdened by environmental and public health hazards.² Latinos in particular often live and work in urban and agricultural areas where they face heightened danger of exposure to air pollution and unsafe drinking water, which can cause serious health problems, including an increased risk of asthma and cancer, waterborne diseases, and neurological and developmental problems.³ Latinos are also at risk of misusing unused medicines: A report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) estimates that 1.1 million Hispanic/Latino youth used illicit drugs in the past year, including 208,000 who misused opioids in the past year.⁴ Experts say that the best way to dispose of unused or expired medicines (both prescription and over the counter) is to drop off the medicine at a drug take back site, location, or program immediately.⁵

HB0517 will establish, fund, and manage a statewide drug take back program for the safe collection and disposal of unused drugs, and mandates that retail and mail-order pharmacies to permanently host drug take-back sites for unwanted medicines, including controlled substances at no charge to consumers. In this way, Maryland will limit the amount of environmental damage caused by dumped medication, as well as the rate of medication misuse.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0517.

¹ [OECD. \(2022\). *Management of Pharmaceutical Household Waste: Limiting Environmental Impacts of Unused or Expired Medicine*. OECD.](#)

² [Barrett, J. F., Peters, M., Jacobs, H., & Rubinstein, J. \(2015\). *Environmental Justice in Maryland*.](#)

³ [Quintero-Somaihi, A., & Ouirindongo, M. \(2004\). *Hidden Danger: Environmental Health Threats in the Latino Community*. Natural Resources Defense Council.](#)

⁴ [Opioid and Illicit Drug Use Among the Hispanic/Latino Populations. \(n.d.\).](#)

⁵ [Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know. \(2021, April 29\). U.S. Food and Drug Administration.](#)