



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy
Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 517
Drug Manufacturers – Drug Take–Back Programs (Take It Back Maryland Act)
Before the House Health and Government Operations Committee
By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
Hearing date: March 2, 2023**

Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 517. This bill would require the creation of a workgroup chaired by Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Department of the Environment to evaluate drug-take back programs, an education campaign on drug take-back options, and a recurring fund paid by drug manufacturers to address gaps identified by the workgroup.

In 2021, more than 106,000 persons in the U.S. died from drug-involved overdoses, including prescription opioids and illicit drugs.¹ Lack of convenient disposal programs for prescription drugs has been linked to poisoning of children and pets; misuse by teenagers and adults; and seniors accidentally taking the wrong medicine. When drugs and medical accessories are not properly disposed of, they can contribute to water pollution, illicit drug use, drug addiction, and threats to sanitation workers. Consumers lacking drug disposal programs in their communities often flush old drugs down the drain or toilet, contributing to water pollution. Numerous studies have found detectable levels of pharmaceuticals in surface and groundwater drinking water sources. Water treatment plants are not equipped to remove such medicines. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency advises consumers not to flush prescription drugs, but to return medications to a disposal or take back program.² Even though 85% of Marylanders live within 10 minutes of a drug take-back location, there is a lack of awareness about drug disposal. Further, existing programs are not sufficiently evaluated for efficacy. This legislation would address the concerns of drug disposal through drug take-back programs by creating awareness among consumers, developing a workgroup to evaluate existing drug take-back programs, and creating a fund to implement any gaps or infrastructure needed as identified by the workgroup. Thank you for your consideration and we urge a favorable report for HB 517.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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¹ Drug overdose death rates. National Institute on Drug Abuse. National Institutes of Health. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>
² Collecting and disposing of unwanted medicines. Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/hwgenerators/collecting-and-disposing-unwanted-medicines>