

The Main Source of Addictive Opioids on the Streets is:

- Drug Cartels
- Street Dealers
- Other Drug Users
- Your Medicine Cabinet
- All of the Above



Ever go to the doctor, get a prescription for an injury or ailment and end up with left over medication? You're not the only one!

- 70% of prescription pain relievers are obtained from family or friends, without the legal prescription holder's knowledge or permission.
- Keeping unused prescription drugs around your house isn't a good idea because heroin use often begins with a prescription, or taking pills from a home medicine cabinet.
- If not disposed of or stored properly, the prescription medications in your house can be stolen and re-sold (or taken accidentally by children).
- 56.5% of teenagers illicitly obtain prescription medications from friends and relatives - the leading cause of abuse!

The fact is that opioid overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, surpassing all sources of accidental injury *combined*. Death from opioids have quadrupled since 1999 and every day, opioid abuse claims the lives of 78 Americans.

As bleak as these statistics are, **YOU HAVE THE POWER TO HELP ELIMINATE ONE-HALF OF THE OPIOIDS ON THE STREETS** by **Disposing of your unused medications properly AND SUPPORTING LEGISLATION TO REQUIRE PHARMACIES TO TAKE BACK UNUSED MEDICATIONS**



Ulster County Department of Health

Michael P. Hein, County Executive - Carol Smith, MD, MPH, Commissioner

EDITORIAL

Friday, April 22, 2016

Big pharmacy chains can help in drug fight

We are at a turning point in the struggle against drug addiction, a time when attitudes have changed, strategies have evolved, failed policies have been abandoned.

It is not hard to figure out why. What once seemed an isolated problem has emerged in neighborhoods far from the familiar troubled streets. Documentary after documentary, story after story profile the nice kid, the athlete, the cheerleader, the one with two supportive parents, with good grades and a promising future, or at least one that was promising until it was cut short by addiction, followed inevitably by repeated rounds of detox and too often by death from an overdose.

The challenge for any government in this effort is finding something that will make a real difference, something that will either help those who are already in trouble or help make it harder for others to get started down this deadly path.

We now take it for granted that those who use heroin can get it cheaply almost anywhere around here in the Hudson Valley, which is no different from any other region in the

country these days. We also take it for granted that those who inevitably turn to heroin most often do so after getting addicted to prescription painkillers, sometimes their own prescriptions but too often those found in the medicine chest at homes, left on the shelf by relatives or neighbors who did not need all the pills they were given.

It is easy to find all of this overwhelming. What would help is a place to start and one local leader, Ulster County Executive Mike Hein, has identified that place.

In his state of the county address earlier this year, he listed all the familiar elements and focused on the difficulty in cleaning out those medicine cabinets, of finding ways to collect the unused pills that too often are the gateway to addiction.

As he noted, counties and law enforcement have tried. But most people do not regularly go to police stations. They do go to pharmacies. That's where they get the drugs in the first place and where they could drop off unneeded supplies if only the companies who run the businesses would provide the opportunity.

"The practical, convenient and most impactful solution is to require large commercial pharmacy chains that make billions of dollars selling medication to New Yorkers to simply take back the unused portion of the narcotics they sell," Hein said. "I am not talking about small, local pharmacies with limited budgets. I am talking about huge national chains that clearly have the means to do this."

Pharmacy chains do not want this responsibility any more than grocery chains wanted to take deposit bottles. Now we take it for granted that we can return bottles to the grocery store. There is no reason why we should not be able to make this even more important return considering how much more is at stake.

If our state legislators and members of Congress are interested in doing something practical and effective in the fight against addiction, they will listen to Hein and make pharmacy chains put some of their profits into effective prevention.

Daily Freeman

A10 OPINION

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Thursday, April 28, 2016 » MORE AT [FACEBOOK.COM/FREEMAN](https://www.facebook.com/freeman) AND [TWITTER.COM/DAILYFREEMAN](https://www.twitter.com/dailyfreeman)

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We need pharmacies' help stemming opioid abuse

Dear Editor,

Much attention has been given to the opioid crisis which our country has experienced. The stories of the tragedy of addiction to both prescription narcotics and illegal heroin and the tragic loss of life due to overdose are well-known to all of us.

A problem as big and as far-reaching as the opioid crisis is a difficult one to resolve.

It takes multiple strategies and the collaborative effort of all stakeholders in the community to control it, and reverse its upward trend. No one group or organization is totally responsible for the problem; and, no one solution exists to end it.

In Ulster County, under the leadership of County Executive Mike Hein, we have established prescription drug collection boxes in 19 sites throughout the county. These boxes are currently located in police departments and sheriff stations. In his State of the County address, Hein

proposed that all national retail pharmacies in our county take back unused medications for safe destruction. This policy change would result in the removal of literally tons of this hazardous waste from home medicine cabinets, and, potentially remove the temptation that could lead to one more preventable tragedy.

The county executive and I ask that national retail pharmacy chains take the responsible and ethically correct action and take back for destruction any unused narcotic prescriptions. Help us prevent the tragic loss of yet another Ulster County resident.

*Carol M. Smith, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health and
Mental Health for Ulster
County
Kingston*



FROM THE OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN



What Can I Do?

Contact Your NYS Representatives

Contact Governor Cuomo and the NYS Legislators and urge them to support Assembly Bill 9883 and Senate Bill 7407, which amend public health law and require that national chain pharmacies take back unused prescription medication and controlled substances.

Governor Andrew Cuomo: 1-518-474-8390 or <http://www.governor.ny.gov/contact>

John J. Flanagan (Senate Majority Leader): 518-455-2071 or Flanagan@nysenate.gov

George Amedore (46th Senatorial District): 845.331.3810 or Amedoreg@nysenate.gov

John J. Bonacic (42nd Senatorial District): 845.344.3311 or Bonacic@nysenate.gov

William J. Larkin (39th Senatorial District): 845.567.1276 or Larkin@nysenate.gov

James L. Seward (51st Senatorial District): 607-432-5524 or Seward@nysenate.gov

Carl Heastie (Assembly Speaker): 518-455-3791 or speaker@assembly.state.ny.us

Aileen Gunther (100th Assembly District): 518-455-5355 or Guntera@assembly.state.ny.us

Claudia Tenney (101st Assembly District): 845-895-1080 or Tenneyc@assembly.state.ny.us

Peter D. Lopez (102nd Assembly District): 518-943-1371 or LopezP@assembly.state.ny.us

Kevin Cahill (103rd Assembly District): 845-338-9610 or CahillK@assembly.state.ny.us

Frank Skartados (104th Assembly District): 845-562-0888 or Skartados@assembly.state.ny.us

Sample Letter of Support for Legislation to Require National Chain Pharmacies Take Back Unused Prescription Medication

Dear (*Insert Name of Elected Representative*),

We are all aware of the opioid epidemic that has ravaged communities across our country, and in Ulster County we are no stranger to the tragedy that can be caused by addiction. Serious opioid abuse, including heroin use, often begins with the abuse of prescription medications. Currently, over 70% of such drugs are obtained from home medicine cabinets without the legal prescription holder's knowledge or permission, and over 56% of teenagers obtain prescription medications from friends and relatives via their medicine cabinets.

Last year the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration amended regulations last year to allow for retail pharmacies, among others, to take back unused portions of prescription medications. Governor Cuomo subsequently signed enabling legislation that allows pharmacies in New York to do the same on a voluntary basis. This is in addition to drop boxes available at law enforcement locations throughout the State as part of the "Shed the Meds" program; in Ulster County we've been fortunate to have among the highest concentration of available disposal sites at police and sheriff stations throughout the State.

While these measures have made a difference, they are not enough to counter the tremendous amount of highly addictive opioid drugs that end up in the wrong hands. I firmly believe that we can do more to protect our children and our communities in the fight against addiction, and I am writing you today to ask for your support of legislation, (**Assembly Bill 9883 / Senate Bill 7407**) recently introduced by (**Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther / Senator Kemp Hannon**), that would require national chain pharmacies to take back unused medications at no cost to customers. Pharmacies are the logical, intuitive, and convenient place for customers to return their unused medications, thus keeping them off the streets and out of our environment.

On behalf of my family and our entire community, I urge you to support this critical legislation as soon as possible and on a non-partisan basis, and to implore your colleagues to do the same.

Sincerely,

STATE OF NEW YORK

9883

IN ASSEMBLY

April 22, 2016

Introduced by M. of A. GUNTHER -- read once and referred to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to disposal sites operated by pharmacies

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 3 of section 3343-b of the public health law,
2 as amended by chapter 379 of the laws of 2015, is amended and a new
3 subdivision 4 is added to read as follows:

4 3. Disposal sites shall be operated by law enforcement agencies, phar-
5 macies that do not meet the definition of "chain pharmacy" as defined in
6 subdivision four of this section, and other Federal Drug Enforcement
7 Administration authorized collectors on a voluntary basis. Nothing in
8 this section shall require any political subdivision of the state to
9 participate in the program established in this section.

10 4. For the purposes of this section, "chain pharmacy" shall mean any
11 pharmacy that is part of a group of four or more establishments that:
12 (a) conduct business under the same business name, or (b) operate under
13 common ownership or management or pursuant to a franchise agreement with
14 the same franchisor. The commissioner shall require any chain pharmacy
15 operating in the state to operate a safe disposal site for unused
16 controlled substances in accordance with this section and federal law
17 and regulations.

18 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD14302-01-6

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION
submitted in accordance with Assembly Rule III, Sec 1(f)**

BILL NUMBER: A9883

SPONSOR: Gunther

TITLE OF BILL: An act to amend the public health law, in relation to disposal sites operated by pharmacies

PURPOSE:

To require chain pharmacies take back prescription medication

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS:

Section 1 adds a new subdivision 4 to subdivision 3 of section 3343-b of the public health law

Section 2 is the effective date.

JUSTIFICATION:

Chapter 79 of the Laws of 2015 allowed pharmacies and other Drug Enforcement Administration authorized collectors to collect unused controlled substances in New York. While this was an important first step in making it easier for people to take back their unused medications, not all pharmacies are voluntarily participating.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the number one reason teens use prescription drugs is that they are easy to get from their parents' medicine cabinets.

New York State already requires certain businesses that sell items such as tires and plastic bottles to accept the return of those items by a customer. Requiring chain pharmacies to take back unused medications would give the state another tool in the fight against prescription drug abuse.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

New Bill

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

None to state

EFFECTIVE DATE:

This act shall take effect immediately

STATE OF NEW YORK

7407

IN SENATE

April 27, 2016

Introduced by Sen. HANNON -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to disposal sites operated by pharmacies

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Subdivision 3 of section 3343-b of the public health law,
2 as amended by chapter 379 of the laws of 2015, is amended and a new
3 subdivision 4 is added to read as follows:

4 3. Disposal sites shall be operated by law enforcement agencies, phar-
5 macies that do not meet the definition of "chain pharmacy" as defined in
6 subdivision four of this section, and other Federal Drug Enforcement
7 Administration authorized collectors on a voluntary basis. Nothing in
8 this section shall require any political subdivision of the state to
9 participate in the program established in this section.

10 4. For the purposes of this section, "chain pharmacy" shall mean any
11 pharmacy that is part of a group of four or more establishments that:
12 (a) conduct business under the same business name, or (b) operate under
13 common ownership or management or pursuant to a franchise agreement with
14 the same franchisor. The commissioner shall require any chain pharmacy
15 operating in the state to operate a safe disposal site for unused
16 controlled substances in accordance with this section and federal law
17 and regulations.

18 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD14302-01-6

**NEW YORK STATE SENATE
INTRODUCER'S MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
submitted in accordance with Senate Rule VI. Sec 1**

BILL NUMBER: S7407

SPONSOR: HANNON

TITLE OF BILL: An act to amend the public health law, in relation to disposal sites operated by pharmacies

PURPOSE:

To require chain pharmacies take back prescription medication.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS:

Section 1 adds a new subdivision 4 to subdivision 3 of section 3343-b of the public health law

Section 2 is the effective date.

JUSTIFICATION:

Chapter 79 of the Laws of 2015 allowed pharmacies and other Drug Enforcement Administration authorized collectors to collect unused controlled substances in New York. While this was an important first step in making it easier for people to take back their unused medications, not all pharmacies are voluntarily participating.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the number one reason teens use prescription drugs is that they are easy to get from their parents' medicine cabinets.

New York State already requires certain businesses that sell items such as tires and plastic bottles to accept the return of those items by a customer. Requiring chain pharmacies to take back unused medications would give the state another tool in the fight against prescription drug abuse.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

New Bill

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

None to the State

EFFECTIVE DATE:

This act shall take effect immediately.



FROM THE OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN



Excerpt from Ulster County Executive Mike Hein's February 9, 2016 State of the County Speech

As a County we have worked extremely hard to reduce the harmful impacts of opioid and heroin addiction. We are investing over \$1.1 million in education, treatment and other important steps like making sure our first responders have easy access to Narcan to help them treat overdoses and prevent senseless tragedies. Soon we will also have a dedicated Family Advocate to assist individuals and families in obtaining treatment and navigating the often daunting world of insurance coverage.

But even with all these efforts, there is still so much left to do. To assist in this effort we need to reach beyond our own community to our policymakers in Albany and Washington, since it is becoming more and more common that people struggling with heroin got their start by using prescription pain pills. Counties across New York have been successful in getting some of these unused medications out of people's medicine cabinets and off the streets with programs called "Shed the Meds." Ulster County has led the way with some of the highest numbers of prescription drug collection boxes in upstate New York at our Sheriff's and town police departments.

While these efforts are important, they are not nearly enough. Unlike their pharmacy, many folks feel very uncomfortable going into police stations so they simply don't. The practical, convenient and most impactful solution is to require large commercial pharmacy chains that make billions of dollars selling medication to New Yorkers to simply take back the unused portion of the narcotics they sell.

I am not talking about small, local pharmacies with limited budgets. I am talking about huge national chains that clearly have the means to do this. Though this may seem like a common sense solution that should already be in place, unfortunately there is a massive loophole in our laws. The industry has powerful lobbyists so the existing State and Federal laws are not mandatory. No one has to participate and very few do.

I am asking the County Legislature to join me in urging our lawmakers in Albany and Washington D.C. to protect our children by demanding that large pharmacy chains simply take back the unused portion of the very medications they make billions in profit by selling.