

February 29, 2016

Hilda L. Solis, Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, First District
500 West Temple Street, Room 856
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Via email to FirstDistrict@bos.lacounty.gov and EPR@LACOUNTY.GOV

SUBJECT: Support for Los Angeles County Pharmaceuticals and Sharps EPR Ordinance

Dear Board Chair Solis:

Blue Shield of California writes to express our support for creating a countywide stewardship program for the safe and convenient disposal of unwanted medicines and sharps from households. Almost everyone has leftover or expired medicines in their homes, and many also have needles (medical sharps). A secure and safe way to dispose of these drugs and needles is needed in order to protect people and the environment.

We are particularly concerned about the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in the communities we serve, and how home medicine cabinets have become the new drug dealers for our kids. Drug abuse is a complex problem, and a secure system for collecting leftover and expired medicines from households is an important part of the solution.

Blue Shield of California launched a three-year Narcotic Safety Initiative in an effort to reduce inappropriate prescribing and overuse of opioid narcotic medications. Since opioids are not very effective for chronic non-cancer pain, may actually worsen pain and lead to drug dependence, the company is working to (1) reduce the number of people on chronically high doses of opioids, (2) reduce the number of people converting from short- to long-term opioid use, and (3) reduce the prescription quantity and number of refills prescribed for people newly starting opioids. Blue Shield has enhanced medication coverage policies and formulary management; engaged providers to practice prudent prescribing and to be proactive in defining care plans that include a plan to taper and stop opioid use; and developed an interdisciplinary case management program that addresses quality, fraud, waste or abuse. In one year, the program has resulted in a reduction in the use of narcotics, particularly people on high doses. Additional programs to manage chronic pain, addiction, and substance abuse will also be launched.

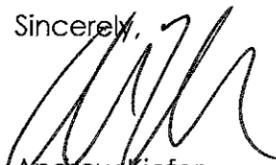
Programs like BSC's Narcotic Safety Initiative and the proposed Los Angeles County ordinance for the safe collection of pharmaceuticals and sharps are two important approaches to combating the opioid abuse epidemic and creating safer communities. Hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and drug companies should all share in the responsibility

to ensure safe management of these products. There is also a need for more public education to not flush or trash medications and instead use the collection system.

It's time to ensure access to safe and convenient take-back locations for pharmaceuticals and sharps. It is reasonable to have the manufacturers of the medicines and sharps provide a stewardship program for their products, just like they already do in other counties and countries around the world.

We support the L.A. County ordinance and ask the Board of Supervisors to pass it.

Sincerely,



Andrew Kiefer
Director, Government Affairs
Blue Shield of California