

**Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.**

April 7, 2016

Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street, Room 383  
Los Angeles, CA 90012



**RE: Support for Los Angeles County Pharmaceutical Drugs and Sharps Collection and Disposal Stewardship Ordinance**

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:

I write in support for the passage of Los Angeles County Pharmaceutical Drugs and Sharps Collection and Disposal Stewardship Ordinance.

I am President of the Waterkeeper Alliance and senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, both strong supporters of resource stewardship. Extended producer responsibility (EPR) is an economically sensible policy approach to waste management. EPR reduces waste and improves water quality while protecting public and environmental health. The LA County ordinance will be built on an EPR “take back” model that will provide safe and convenient options for disposal of unused drugs and sharps to protect the public and aquatic life from pharmaceuticals flushed into the water system.

This ordinance follows similar measures in Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Marin and other California counties. It’s a model for a comprehensive, fair and environmentally sound national precedent. When companies and state and federal governments fail to act to safeguard public health and the environment, local governments like the Los Angeles Supervisors have shown they are ready to lead with innovative action. Los Angeles County citizens are asking the pharmaceutical industry to shoulder its responsibility to safely manage waste medications and sharps.

Contrary to Pharma’s assertions, the cost of the ordinance will not be a burden on consumers, the poor and those on fixed incomes. In fact, the industry stipulated that the annual cost of compliance was at most 0.1% of the price of prescriptions drugs sold in Alameda County in *Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America v. County of Alameda*. In that case, the US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Alameda County “take back” ordinance. The L A. County ordinance is modeled on this. It is well known that seniors go to countries like Mexico and Canada so they can afford their medications; both of these countries have producer funded and operated stewardship programs. Clearly, the effect on consumers is not the reason Big Pharma opposes this ordinance.

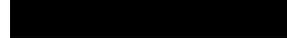
Residential stockpiling of unused household medications leads to easy access and drug abuse by children and teens. Flushing and throwing away medication can harm the environment, including drinking water. Sharps in the waste system are dangerous to workers handling waste as well as to people in the neighborhoods and water bodies where they may end up.

Safe disposal of pharmaceuticals and sharps should be a shared responsibility. The costs should not fall solely on local governments and taxpayers. Companies who profit should also share in the end of life cost, and work with the County and its many constituencies eager to support a viable collection program through partnership. I applaud the Supervisors' leadership and encourage you to proceed and adopt the ordinance. And I hope that this leads to national action to provide safe and convenient unused medication stewardship programs designed, funded and operated by the pharmaceutical companies. Such programs already exist elsewhere in California, and in Mexico, Canada, and around the world.

Respectfully,

*/s/ Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.*

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.



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