

## **Supporting a secure, convenient medicine return program to reduce the public health and environmental health impacts of unwanted medicines.**

**WHEREAS** accidental poisonings in Washington State have increased 395% from 1990 through 2006<sup>1</sup>, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that drugs caused 95% of the unintentional and undetermined poisoning deaths,<sup>2</sup> and

**WHEREAS** unwanted medicines left in the home could increase opportunities for drug abuse, diversion, and teen “pharming,” the slang term applied to the random ingestion of prescription drugs in order to become intoxicated<sup>3</sup>, and

**WHEREAS** abuse of prescription pain killers ranks second, only behind marijuana, as the Nation's most prevalent illegal drug problem,<sup>4</sup> and

**WHEREAS** over half of the people using prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons obtained them from a friend or relative for free,<sup>5</sup> and

**WHEREAS** unwanted medicines disposed to sanitary sewer systems are not completely treated by the wastewater treatment facilities, allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment,<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS** unwanted medicines disposed to solid waste systems may end up in landfill leachate, which is pumped to wastewater treatment facilities, eventually allowing pharmaceuticals to be released into the environment,<sup>7</sup> and

**WHEREAS** pharmaceuticals have been detected in the surface waters of Washington State and around the United States,<sup>8,9</sup> and

**WHEREAS** pharmaceuticals have been found in the drinking water of 24 major metropolitan areas affecting 41 million Americans,<sup>10</sup> and

**WHEREAS** the number and volume of pharmaceuticals prescribed to U.S. residents has increased dramatically in the past decade,<sup>11</sup> with Washington State residents now purchasing an average of 9 prescriptions per year,<sup>12</sup> resulting in greater accumulations in Washington State homes, and

**WHEREAS** unused or unwanted quantities of prescription and over-the-counter medicines are projected to be substantial, with some studies estimating that between 30% and 80% of patients do not finish commonly prescribed medicines such as pain medicines, antibiotics, and beta blockers,<sup>6</sup> and

**WHEREAS** a pilot medicine return project operating in Washington State since October of 2006 by Group Health Cooperative and Bartell Drugs, in cooperation with a coalition of local and state governments and non-profits, has collected more than 11,000 pounds of unwanted household pharmaceuticals, demonstrating the demand and feasibility of such a system,<sup>14</sup> and

**WHEREAS** pharmaceutical manufacturers currently operate and fund successful drug take-back systems in Canada and several countries in Europe,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Washington State Public Health Association (WSPHA) supports a convenient, safe, secure, and environmentally sound product stewardship program for the collection, transportation, and disposal of unwanted medications from Washington State households to reduce accidental poisonings, decrease illegitimate access to drugs that can lead to abuse, and reduce contamination of our surface and groundwater, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that WSPHA looks to pharmaceutical manufacturers as the most appropriate source of funding and operational expertise for a Washington State take-back system.

**References:**

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**Supporting Individuals or Organizations:**

**Washington State Nurses Association**

**Washington State Association of Occupational Health Nurses**

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**David Stitzhal**, President, Full Circle Environmental, Inc

**Suellen Mele**, Program Director, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

**Organizations and Government Agencies Supporting 2008 Legislation (SHB 3064) to create a statewide secure medicine return program:**

Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses

Bartell Drugs

Breast Cancer Fund

Children's Alliance

Coalition for Clean Water

Environment Washington  
Group Health Cooperative  
King County  
League of Women Voters of Washington  
Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County  
People For Puget Sound  
School Nurse Organization of Washington  
Senior Citizens' Lobby  
Sierra Club Cascade Chapter  
Thurston County  
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs  
Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation  
Washington Food Industry  
Washington Organic Recycling Council  
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials  
Washington State Association of Occupational Health Nurses  
Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization  
Washington State Nurses Association  
Washington State Pharmacy Association  
WashPIRG  
Yakima County

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