



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 3, 2009

The Honorable Karen Keiser, Chair
Health and Long-Term Care Committee
Washington State Senate
Post Office Box 40466
Olympia, Washington 98504-0466

Dear Senator Keiser:

I am writing as chair of the Washington State Board of Health to let you know of the Board's interest in promoting pharmaceutical take back programs that are easily accessible to consumers. The Board supports the concepts expressed in SB 5279 (companion bill HB 1165) scheduled to be heard before the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee at 8 a.m. on February 4. The Board has a concern that the mechanism proposed in the bill might not be able to address the greatest risk to public health from unused pharmaceuticals—the diversion of narcotics for non-medicinal use.

The accidental or intentional misuse of pharmaceuticals is a growing problem in the United States, including Washington State. The Board is particularly concerned about the increasing number of deaths from misuse of prescription opioids. Some of this use might be avoided by establishing secure and environmentally friendly procedures for the collection and disposal of unwanted prescription drugs. Unfortunately, the inclusion of narcotics in state or local programs is restricted by regulations of the federal Drug Enforcement Administration. Whatever the outcome of this legislation, we would support efforts of the Legislature to encourage the federal government to work with states to develop effective take back programs that would help remove unused legally prescribed controlled substances from circulation.

Thank you for considering this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Treuman Katz".

Treuman Katz
Chair

cc: Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee Members
The Honorable Adam Kline, Washington State Senate
The Honorable Dawn Morrell, Washington State House of Representatives
Washington State Board of Health Members
Ms. Christina Hulet, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Mr. Brian Peyton, Department of Health
Mr. Ted Sturdevant, Department of Ecology
Mr. Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health