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SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/
INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE
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September 10, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE – SENATE BILL 212 SOLID WASTE: PHARMACEUTICAL AND SHARPS WASTE STEWARDSHIP

The Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) respectfully requests your signature on Senate Bill (SB 212). SB 212 would require manufacturers of pharmaceuticals and sharps, as defined, to create, finance, and manage an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for California consumers to safely and conveniently dispose of expired and unwanted pharmaceuticals and sharps. These products serve a vital need in protecting and preserving the health of Californians, and that is all the more reason to also protect Californians from the inherent risks that occur when these products become waste.

The Task Force strongly supports enactment of SB 212 because, among other things, the bill addresses the following:

- It will provide for proper collection and management of pharmaceuticals and sharps which would otherwise pose a significant health risk to the general public including solid waste, wastewater, sanitation and other workers.
- It will help mitigate the ongoing pharmaceutical drug abuse epidemic in California.
- It will financially assist local governments that have been spending millions each year implementing pharmaceutical and sharps collection programs. Manufacturers of these products should share in the responsibility to properly manage this problematic waste.

Existing Risk to Californians

Despite the fact that California law (SB 1305 in 2006) has prohibited home-generated sharps waste from being disposed of in trash or recycling containers, millions of needles are discarded irresponsibly every year, resulting in an unacceptable risk of needle stick injuries for parks, hotels, solid waste, wastewater, sanitation and other workers as well as the general public.

[CalRecycle](#) estimates 936 million sharps used by consumers in California each year, approximately 31 percent of those are thrown in the trash. [Another study by University Massachusetts Lowell in 2015](#) estimated 7 percent of needles are flushed, and needle stick

injuries occur with unacceptable frequency. Improper disposal of sharps poses an unacceptable risk to many Californians, and the statewide sharps collection program contained in SB 212 will significantly reduce that risk.

Drug Abuse Epidemic

Similarly, prescription, over the counter, and pet medications present significant problems when leftover if not properly secured and disposed of. There is no question that consumers have leftover drugs in their homes, which tend to be stockpiled, flushed, or thrown in the garbage. Of note, according to the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, nearly 75 percent of residents who misuse prescription drugs obtain them from friends or relatives. Leftover drugs and a lack of safe and convenient disposal options are fuel to the opioid epidemic and increase instances of accidental poisonings and can cause environmental harm. According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH), during the period of 2000 to 2009, there were 8,265 drug-related deaths in Los Angeles County. The DPH statistics show that 61 percent of those deaths involved a commonly abused prescription or over-the-counter drug.

Local Government Resources

The County of Los Angeles alone spends millions each year implementing a Countywide Household Hazardous and Electronic Waste Program in order to educate and provide a convenient opportunity for residents to properly manage toxic products and materials including non-controlled pharmaceuticals. For too long, municipal governments have cobbled together local collection options that fail to meet public demand for safe disposal, draw resources from other vital government functions, create a patchwork of regulations, and fail to realize the efficiency that would come from a statewide program.

Senate Bill 212 addresses the myriad of problems that exist due to the lack of a statewide system to manage these products at the end of their useful life. By requiring manufacturers of sharps and pharmaceutical drugs to create, fund, and participate in a statewide take-back system, this bill will take a groundbreaking step to ensure that California residents throughout the state have access to safe, convenient disposal methods of sharps and drugs, addressing important public health concerns.

SB 212's concept is built off well-functioning programs that exist all over the world – effective take-back programs for these products are operated by manufacturers in [Canada, Mexico, many countries in Europe and South America](#), 12 local jurisdictions throughout California. Establishing a comprehensive statewide system will provide harmonization and clarity for manufacturers and consumers alike.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared for the County of Los Angeles and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of ten million. Consistent with these responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
September 10, 2018
Page 3

also addresses issues impacting the system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities Los Angeles County Division, County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

California has debated this issue for long enough. We strongly urge you to take this logical next step to protect California consumers and workers.

Based on the foregoing, the Task Force strongly supports SB 212, and respectfully requests your signature on this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer, a member of the Task Force, at MikeMohajer@yahoo.com or at (909) 592 - 1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Rosemead

EC:BC:mq

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cc: Senator Jackson
Assembly Member Gray
Assembly Member Ting
Melinda Grant, Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities – Los Angeles County Division
Each member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Sachi A. Hamai, Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
South Bay Cities Council of Governments
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
Westside Cities Council of Governments
Each City Mayor and City Manager in the County of Los Angeles
Each City Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management
Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force