

## TALKING POINTS

### **L.D. 1826, AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE THE PROPER DISPOSAL OF EXPIRED PHARMACEUTICALS**

*Introduced by Senator Lynn Bromley*

This bill creates the **Unused Pharmaceutical Disposal Program** to encourage Mainers to safely clean out their medicine cabinets.

#### **How the program works**

The bill sets up a system under which individuals may mail their unused or expired prescription drugs in a pre-paid mailer to a post office box monitored by the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency (MDEA). The MDEA would then collect the mailers at various times and destroy them by incineration.

The MDEA already destroys drug evidence by incineration when it is no longer needed in the court system. This bill would change the volume of drugs incinerated.

People would obtain these pre-paid mailers from a variety of places, such as pharmacies, health care provider's offices, etc.

**The bill does not request state money for the Program. The Program will be funded by outside sources (non-state money). The bill allows the MDEA to accept grants for the implementation of the Program.**

This is a voluntary program for individuals and providers. This does not mandate the disposal of prescription drugs through the mailer program. Current disposal methods are not outlawed. This program provides individuals with a safe and effective alternative. The program does not mandate that health care providers make the mailers available.

#### **Why the Program is needed**

Prescription drug overdoses has become a major public health care crisis in Maine. Access to these drugs is difficult to assess through prescription information because people often neglect to discard unused or old medications.

In the case of accidental drug overdoses, only half the victims had a documented prescription for at least one drug that was listed in the cause of death. The lack of documented prescriptions for many drugs list in the cause of death suggests they have been diverted from other sources. This was found in the Margaret Chase Smith Center's report on Maine Drug Related Mortality Patterns, from 1997-2002.

Young children continue to be a group who accidentally ingest pharmaceuticals as documented by Poison Control calls.

Law enforcement is seeing an increase in today's youth raiding accessible medicine cabinets for unused prescription drugs and either abusing them, selling them, or sharing them at parties. Those substances are often unknown to the user and are used in combination with other drugs with tragic results.

Elderly have become targets of break-ins for their medications.

An increasing amount of pharmaceuticals is being detected in the water supply and environment, making disposal a growing issue and one with which the EPA and DEP now are quite concerned. Throwing prescription drugs in the trash creates more opportunity to access to the drugs by wildlife and deliberate searches. Pharmaceutical contamination of estuaries is a growing national problem and one which could have profound economic impact on the State of Maine.