



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Health & Human Services  
February 8, 2018 at 9:00 a.m.

By  
Carolyn Ma, PharmD, BCOP  
DEAN  
UH Hilo – Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy

### HB 2125 – RELATING TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and members of the committee:

My name is Carolyn Ma, and I am the Dean for the UH Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy (DKICP). University of Hawai'i at Hilo fully supports this bill that will amend HRS 461 and require a pharmacy to accept for disposal the return of unused, remaining, or expired prescription drugs that the pharmacy previously dispensed.

Unused medications in households and at various patient care facilities expose residents to potential harm due to mistaken ingestion and increase the potential for theft and assault. In children  $\leq 5$  years old, medication overdoses are the most common.<sup>1</sup> Annually, more than 71,000 children under the age of 19 present to emergency rooms for unintentional overdoses of prescription and over the counter drugs annually.<sup>2</sup> The problem can add to drug abuse in young adults aged 18-25 (5.9%) while 3% of teens (12-17 yrs) have the second highest rate.<sup>3</sup> So called “pharm parties”, social gatherings where prescription drugs are consumed with alcohol have gained popularity in recent years in both age groups.<sup>3,4</sup>

In partnership with the Narcotics Enforcement Department, the DKICP has participated in annual Drug Take Back events since 2012. In 2014, our efforts to quantify and describe the types of returned medications was published in the Hawaii Journal of Medicine and Public Health.<sup>5</sup> In 2 large Drug Take Back events at the annual Good Life Senior Expo (3 days) and at 9 one-day events on O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and Hawai'i Island, a total of over 8000 pounds of medications were recovered. Seven of the top 10 types of medications were classified as cardiovascular agents. The most common non-prescription medications included aspirin, naproxen and ibuprofen. Controlled substances comprised 10% of the returned medications, the most common was the combination hydrocodone/acetaminophen medications (CII). The DEA also continues to hold Drug Take Back events.

Other states such as California have passed laws that mandate pharmacies, police or fire departments to accept unused medications. Certainly, logistics, safety and security

issues need to be discussed and detailed, however, the need for this law will help to increase public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2125.

## References

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2. Epidemic Responding to America's Prescription Drug Crisis. Executive Office of the President of the United States (2011)
3. Prescription Drug: abuse and Addiction Adolescents and young adults. National Institute on Drug Abuse
4. Leinwand D. Prescription place in teen culture. *USA Today.* June 13, 2006
5. Ma, CS, Batz, F, Taira Juarez, D, Ladao, L, Drug Take Back in Hawai'i: Partnership Between the University of Hawai'i Hilo College of Pharmacy and The Narcotics Enforcement Division. *HJMPH* 2014;73:1(26-31)