



Drug Take-Back Program Forced on Big Pharma in San Francisco

Health, Senior and Environmental Leaders Thank SF Board of Supervisors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA (March 10, 2015) -- Despite a major push by lobbyists for pharmaceutical corporations, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously today to hold drug companies financially responsible for a plan to take back and safely dispose of unused medications in the City. Alcohol Justice and the San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition joined other groups and individuals today to thank the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for passing the *Safe Drug Disposal Stewardship* program. The ordinance goes for a second vote next week and then to Mayor Ed Lee for "likely signature" according to proponents.

"The SF Board of Supervisors made great public health policy today over aggressive lobbying by Big Pharma, building on a model program from Alameda County," stated Bruce Lee Livingston, Executive Director / CEO of Alcohol Justice and a staff of the San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition, which both supported passage of the ordinance. *"Every year there are tons of excess prescription drugs posing a threat to public safety, the environment, and our children in particular. This legislation protects kids and seniors from excess drugs and reduces harm to the Bay and Ocean."*

The ordinance was authored by Board of Supervisors President London Breed, and co-sponsored by Supervisors Eric Mar, Norman Yee, and Jane Kim. They followed the lead of Alameda County public health officials who passed a similar ordinance last year. That measure prompted a lawsuit by Big Pharma front groups. The U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco, however, upheld the law's constitutionality and rejected the lawsuit. The plaintiffs are still appealing further to the Supreme Court and have vowed to file lawsuits in San Francisco.

"For every one hundred pills that could be disposed of in this program, it costs approximately one penny," stated Hene Kelly, Legislative Director at the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA). *"Our environment, our children, our elders, three things we have to protect, will be protected by this ordinance."*

"We talk to the public every day; people in San Francisco recognize that these pharmaceutical are getting in the Bay, and they are concerned when they flush or throw these chemicals into the trash and they are looking for solutions that are cost effective," said Andria Ventura, Toxics Program Manager for Clean Water Action (CWA). *"Most of all we have heard that industry needs to take responsibility both for the physical creation of these programs and for the financial aspects."*

"We are grateful that both Alameda and San Francisco have taken the bold step of holding the drug industry accountable for safely disposing the dangerous substances they create," added Livingston. *"We look forward now to helping Marin County do the same within months."*

For more information: www.alcoholjustice.org

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