



**TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
ON SEWAGE RIGHT TO KNOW (SB. 88)
AND PHARMACEUTICAL DISPOSAL (SB. 92)**

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Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, distinguished members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to protect public health and the natural environment. CCE is testifying today in support of SB. 88 and SB. 92.

SB. 88- AAC THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW OF A SEWAGE SPILL

Many communities in Connecticut are served by aging and failing wastewater infrastructure. When sewage infrastructure is not properly operated or maintained, billions of gallons of raw, untreated sewage can be released in to the environment before being treated. Raw sewage overflows contaminate ground and surface waters, flood our streets, close beaches and adversely affect our fisheries. According to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), over 1 billion gallons of raw or partially treated sewage are discharged into the Long Island Sound and local waterways each year.

Discharges of untreated sewage from sanitary sewer overflows and combined sewer overflows (CSOs) represent a significant threat to public health, the environment, and our economy.

- According to the EPA, between 1.8 and 3.5 million Americans become ill every year from recreational contact with waters contaminated by SSOs, with the elderly, children, and immune compromised being particularly susceptible.
- Bacteria, viruses and parasites found in untreated sewage can cause severe short-term health impacts such as gastrointestinal problems, infections and fever, as well as serious chronic conditions such as heart, liver or kidney failure, arthritis, and cancer.
- Economic losses from beach closures due to pathogen contamination are estimated to reach one to two billion dollars annually in the US.
- Raw sewage adversely impacts drinking water quality, carrying disease-causing microorganisms, floating human wastes, toxic pollutants, household waste and chemicals, oils and grease, heavy metals, pesticides, drugs and other contaminants.

CCE supports a sewage notification system to provide the public with information about sewage spills in a timely manner. Prompt notification of sewage spills will initiate proactive and preventative measures to warn the public of health and safety risks that they may be exposed to while fishing, swimming, diving and boating.

SB. 92- AAC THE DISPOSAL AND COLLECTION OF UNUSED MEDICATION

Flushing unwanted or unused medication has become a common disposal practice, despite the fact that sewage treatment plants, septic systems, and drinking water infrastructure are not designed to remove these contaminants. Research points to several potential health concerns, including hormone disruption, antibiotic resistance, and synergistic effects. Studies have shown impacts including: feminization of male fish when exposed to hormones (birth control pills) and reduced fertility due to exposure to anti-depressants and beta blockers. A nationwide study done in 1999 and 2000 by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) found low levels of drugs such as antibiotics, hormones, contraceptives, and steroids in 80% of the rivers and streams tested.

Connecticut should promote the safe disposal of unused and expired medication, while preventing adverse impacts of pharmaceuticals in the environment. State-run pharmaceutical collection events have proven effective, but are infrequent and may not be widely accessible to all residents in the state. By installing a permanent drop-off location for unused and unwanted pharmaceutical at police departments across Connecticut, residents will have a consistent and secure alternative to flushing unwanted medications- a practice which has become commonplace in the absence of formal drug disposal policies. An educational component at the point of sale will help inform the public about the new law, and provide individuals who take prescription medication with the locations of disposal sites in their area.

CCE supports a statewide pharmaceutical disposal system that will remove unused and unwanted pharmaceuticals from the wastewater stream and protect public health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and CCE looks forward to working with you on this issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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