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**TESTIMONY RE: Raised Bill No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING DISPOSAL AND
COLLECTION OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS**

Committee on Environment
February 25, 2013

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and esteemed members of the
Committee on Environment

I am Mary Jane Williams, RN, PhD, chair, Government Relations Committee, Connecticut Nurses' Association, Member Steering Committee Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments and Professor Emeritus Central Connecticut State University.

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut I am providing testimony in strong support of Raised Bill No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING DISPOSAL AND COLLECTION OF UNUSED MEDICATIONS.

Increased awareness around the presence of pharmaceuticals in our environment and drinking water has resulted in closer scrutiny and increased regulatory oversight of pharmaceutical waste. Pharmaceuticals in the waste stream can pose several different types of risk. The most straightforward is that the active ingredients in a discarded drug could act on an unintended target. But other ingredients in pharmaceutical formulations can present health hazards. Preservatives and other ingredients can pose a toxicity hazard over and above the effect of the main active ingredients. Some compounds are radioactive, including certain chemotherapy drugs (EPA).

The US Geologic Society has done extensive work to characterize the kinds and volumes of pharmaceuticals ending up in waterways. The U.S. Geologic Services has reported that PPCPs such as steroids, prescription and nonprescription drugs, antibiotics, hormones, and fragrances have been detected in water samples collected from streams considered susceptible to contamination from various wastewater sources such as those downstream from intense urbanization. To date, much research has focused on the potential for pathogen resistance to antibiotics and endocrine distribution by natural and synthetic sex steroids (hercenter).

While hazardous pharmaceutical waste management is a headline news item at the moment, it is not a new regulation. The US Environmental Protection Agency's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) was written in 1976, yet healthcare pharmaceuticals flew under the radar, until about 2004. In studies it was found that pharmaceutical waste management was grossly inefficient in health care facilities. Enforcement efforts accelerated as a result, Joint Commission began training its surveyors to begin asking questions about proper pharmaceutical management. Also many Health Care agencies have been slow to develop and implement policies for proper disposal (EPA).

The increased use of Pharmaceuticals in the home, a growing elderly population and an increase in the provision of care in the home has increased the potential for an increases in the total amount of pharmaceutical in the environment. As the evidence mounts that pharmaceuticals are entering the groundwater, and drinking water reserves, the once-common practice of flushing pharmaceuticals is no longer considered best practice.

The challenge is to reduce environmental risks by safely managing and disposing of the pharmaceuticals, while developing a set of practices to produce less waste to begin with, and reduce toxicity where alternatives exist. (Greenhealth's Guide)

Therefore we strongly urge the Committee to support the proposed legislation. It is essential that Connecticut have a plan for pharmaceutical disposal that is safe. The public we serve need the support and the education to enhance the proper disposal of pharmaceuticals, that have the potential of causing illness as an unintended consequence of improper disposal.

Thank you

Mary Jane M. Williams PhD, RN

References

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