Connecticut Water Works Association
Working for Quality Water

Testimony
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The Connecticut Water Works Association (CWWA), which represents municipal, private and regional water companies, ***supports*** **SB-378, AN ACT CONCERNING THE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF UNWANTED PHARMACEUTICALS,** which requires the commissioner of Consumer Protection to develop and implement a program for the collection and disposal of unwanted pharmaceuticals.

As stewards of the state's water resources, CWWA members are committed to supporting efforts to protect the state's water supplies. As such, we are monitoring studies associated with the effect of pharmaceuticals on water quality. An extensive nationwide study by the U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) has found evidence of pharmaceuticals in surface waters throughout the nation. Although no one knows at this point what the presence of medications in the waste stream means for the environment and for humans, there is some evidence of harm to aquatic organisms that is raising concerns among researchers.

For example, in Boulder Creek, Colorado, researchers found that female white suckers outnumber males by more than five to one, and that 50% of males have female sex tissue. Similar intersex changes have been found in flat-head chubs and smallmouth bass. In addition, a Baylor University researcher found tiny amounts of Prozac in liver and brain tissue of channel catfish and black crappie captured in a creek near Dallas that receives almost all of its flow from a wastewater treatment plant.

Recognizing these concerns, the US Environmental Protection Agency and three other government agencies agreed last year to coordinate research efforts regarding pharmaceuticals in sources of drinking water and to obtain and share occurrence and health effects data, coordinate joint studies and plan interagency meetings and public conferences.

Fortunately, Connecticut is one of two states in the nation that prohibits discharges from wastewater treatment plants within public water supply watersheds. This means that, unlike other states, Connecticut's public water supplies are at very little risk of exposure to pharmaceuticals that have been flushed through sewers into the wastewater stream.

In response to growing concerns that unused medications that are flushed down the drain may endanger the aquatic environment, several water companies have worked with local and state law enforcement officials to collect unused medications and ensure that they are disposed of properly. In addition, the state Department of Consumer Protection has launched the Medication Drop Box Program to collect unused drugs. Municipal police departments across the state are installing medication drop-boxes in their facilities to make it easier for people to safely dispose of unused or unwanted medications.

SB-378 builds on these efforts by formalizing the program for the collection of unwanted pharmaceuticals and calling for the state to develop a public safety awareness campaign regarding the proper disposal of medications. **CWWA urges your support.**

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