

Summary of **The Safe Disposal of Opioids Act**

Facilitating Responsible and Effective Disposal of Unwanted Prescription Medications Introduced by Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici

Millions of Americans misuse prescription drugs each month, with tens of thousands dying every year from causes related to opioid abuse. Many people become addicted to opioids after receiving a prescription to treat pain from an injury or following a surgery. But approximately one out of every three prescribed medications is unused, and six in ten patients have leftover pills. It's not surprising that more than 75 percent of people who become dependent on opioids report they first started with pills they got from a friend or family member.

Many people have unused medications at home that too often fall into the hands of children, family members, or friends. Unfortunately, families often don't know where or how to safely dispose of unused pills. Almost 50 percent of people receiving prescriptions reported not receiving any information on how or where to dispose of unwanted medication, and fewer than seven percent of people with leftover prescriptions reported using "takeback" programs to safely get rid of medication.

Pharmacies and hospitals are currently authorized to make disposal services available to the public, but few actually offer them. A [recent study](#) by the Government Accountability Office found that less than 2.5 percent of pharmacies, hospitals, and other eligible entities participate in prescription disposal programs. The cost of purchasing, installing, and maintaining takeback bins all pose major barriers to participation.

The **Safe Disposal of Opioids Act** would amend the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) to create a grant program at the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to help qualified settings acquire and maintain drug disposal bins. The emphasis is on placing the bins in community pharmacies and other health care settings where patients also receive medication. These grants would be paid for by levying a small fee on opioids sold by pharmaceutical manufacturers. The bill also includes a rebate program to ensure these costs are not passed along to cancer and hospice patients who rely on opioid medications for pain management. Overall, the revenue created by this proposal would provide enough funding to implement and service approximately 10,000 takeback sites.

This legislation will make drug disposal options more available and accessible in communities across the nation. By helping families discard unwanted prescription medications, we can prevent drug diversion that may lead to substance abuse, addiction, and potentially even death.