

Testimony on H.414 - An act relating to establishing an unused drug repository for Vermont

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The purpose of an Unused Drug Repository Program (UDRP) is to get medications into the hands of the people who need them. A UDRP collects and distributes unused medications that would otherwise be discarded from institutions (e.g. long-term care facilities and hospitals) and individuals. The medications are inspected by pharmacists to ensure they are safe, properly sealed, not tampered with, and not expired, and patients access the medication through participating pharmacies and clinicians.

As in 2018, there remains a strong consensus among stakeholders in support of establishing a UDRP given the substantial health, economic and environmental benefits associated with these programs. The Department anticipates thousands of Vermonters will gain access to needed medications that they either cannot afford or struggle to afford, which would have positive impacts on their health and quality of life. The economic benefits fall into a few buckets. First, millions of dollars' worth of medicine are likely to be saved and returned to people who need it. Nationally, unused drug repository programs have realized a return on investment of 8:1. For Vermont, the projections that were provided ranged between an annual value of \$3.5-\$7 million. Notably, this figure only accounts for the value of the medications and does not include the associated economic benefits of having a healthier community and workforce. Health care system costs are also likely to see downward pressure. Finally, institutions that currently pay to have this unused medicine disposed of would save on the costs to discard these medications. The environmental benefits are derived from the reduction in drugs – likely measured in tons – that are discarded and entered into the waste stream.

The Department is supportive of the bill language included in H.414, which would give the Agency of Human Services the authority to contract for, and regulate the work of, an Unused Drug Repository Program. Ideally, the State would find a non-profit organization with the infrastructure to undertake this work, which would reduce the administration costs (warehouse/IT/distribution), and expand the type and quantity of medications that are available to Vermonters compared to if Vermont were the only donor state.

If this bill becomes law, the Department plans to initiate stakeholder outreach and rulemaking promptly. We appreciate the committee's consideration of this bill.