

**Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager**  
**In Support of House Bill 3273**  
**House Committee on Health Care**  
**March 21, 2019**



Chair Salinas and Members of the Committee:

As you know, Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area, with major responsibility for managing the region's solid waste and providing opportunities for recycling and waste reduction. Metro serves a population of more than 1.5 million, providing services and educational resources that protect the environment and reduce the amount and toxicity of the solid waste stream.

Metro strongly supports House Bill 3273. Oregonians need a safe, secure and convenient system for disposing of their unused medicines. Unused medicines pose serious health and safety risks. These include accidental deaths or poisonings and abuse by teens who think prescription drugs are somehow safer than street drugs. Providing this system will reduce access to these unused medications, thereby reducing both accidents and abuse.

Collecting harmful and hazardous materials is an important part of the mission of Metro's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program. Our program includes two permanent facilities and a series of neighborhood collection events that serve more than 55,000 customers a year. We collect unused medicines (non-controlled substances) at our sites. We estimate our program receives about 10,000 pounds of these unused medicines per year and that we pay over \$30,000 to dispose of that material. While we look to others to take medicines that are federally controlled substances, we do have a program to provide prepaid mail-back envelopes to customers for those controlled medicines. However, the mailers cost us \$8 apiece. While this is an important service to offer our customers, the more convenient system HB 3273 would create for both controlled and uncontrolled substances represents a far better approach.

The makers of pharmaceutical products should take responsibility for the safe management of the unused portion of their products. Like all Oregonians, residents of the Portland metropolitan region currently benefit from similar statewide stewardship programs for paint (PaintCare) and electronics (Oregon E-Cycles). Based on our experience with those stewardship programs, we believe HB 3273 is well crafted to address the necessary elements of an efficient and effective statewide product stewardship program.

We hope a future legislature will also consider a product stewardship bill for a related medical item, namely, sharps (hypodermic needles). Metro offers a sharps container exchange program at considerable expense to our solid waste rate payers. Most local hospitals and pharmacies do not accept used sharps from their customers. A stewardship program that placed disposal kiosks for sharps alongside HB 3273 pharmaceutical disposal kiosks would be of great benefit to the public.

Metro believes that the product stewardship approach taken in HB 3273 offers the most effective and appropriate solution to the problem of unwanted medicines and will benefit all of the citizens of Oregon. We urge you to move it forward.