

RCW 69.48.010 Findings. (1) Abuse, fatal overdoses, and poisonings from prescription and over-the-counter medicines used in the home have emerged as an epidemic in recent years. Poisoning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death in Washington, and more than ninety percent of poisoning deaths are due to drug overdoses. Poisoning by prescription and over-the-counter medicines is also one of the most common means of suicide and suicide attempts, with poisonings involved in more than twenty-eight thousand suicide attempts between 2004 and 2013.

(2) Home medicine cabinets are the most common source of prescription drugs that are diverted and misused. Studies find about seventy percent of those who abuse prescription medicines obtain the drugs from family members or friends, usually for free. People who are addicted to heroin often first abused prescription opiate medicines. Unused, unwanted, and expired medicines that accumulate in homes increase risks of drug abuse, overdoses, and preventable poisonings.

(3) A safe system for the collection and disposal of unused, unwanted, and expired medicines is a key element of a comprehensive strategy to prevent prescription drug abuse, but disposing of medicines by flushing them down the toilet or placing them in the garbage can contaminate groundwater and other bodies of water, contributing to long-term harm to the environment and animal life.

(4) The legislature therefore finds that it is in the interest of public health to establish a single, uniform, statewide system of regulation for safe and secure collection and disposal of medicines through drug "take-back" programs operated and funded by drug manufacturers. [2021 c 155 § 1; 2018 c 196 § 1.]

Sunset Act application: See note following chapter digest.

Findings—Intent—2021 c 155: "(1) The legislature finds that in 2018, the legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1047, which required drug manufacturers that sell drugs into Washington to operate a drug take-back program to collect and dispose of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Further, the legislature finds that there is uncertainty about whether, under current law, more than one drug take-back program may operate.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to clearly authorize the department of health to approve and allow the operation of multiple drug take-back programs that meet all statutory requirements." [2021 c 155 § 2.]