



WHEREAS: Lack of free, convenient programs for proper disposal of unneeded or expired consumer prescription drugs and accessories contributes to water pollution, illicit drug use, drug addiction, and threats to sanitation workers.

Consumers lacking drug disposal programs in their communities often flush old drugs down the drain or toilet, contributing to water pollution. Numerous studies have found detectable levels of pharmaceuticals in surface and groundwater drinking water sources. Water treatment plants are not equipped to remove such medicines. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency advises consumers not to flush prescription drugs, but to return medications to a disposal or take back program.

In 2014, overdoses from prescription pain medications killed more than 18,000 Americans. President Obama has said that most young people who begin misusing prescription drugs get them from the medicine cabinet. Lack of convenient disposal programs for prescription drugs has been linked to poisoning of children and pets; misuse by teenagers and adults; and seniors accidentally taking the wrong medicine. About 3 billion needles are used in U.S. homes annually to deliver medication; their improper disposal leads to needles washing up on beaches and threats to sanitation workers handling waste with used needles.

Most U.S. communities lack free, convenient, on-going collection programs that could help alleviate these critical problems. The Drug Enforcement Administration has partnered with state and local law enforcement agencies to hold periodic National Take-Back Days for medicines, collecting and disposing of more than 5.5 million pounds of medications in just ten events. But far more convenient and ongoing collection services are needed. The National Drug Control Strategy report calls for establishment of long-term, sustainable disposal programs in communities.

The concept of producer responsibility calls for company accountability for financing take back of unneeded or expired medications and accessories by the companies that have placed them on the market. Several states have enacted regulations requiring manufacturers of paint, pesticides, and electronics to develop programs for take back and proper recycling or disposal. The province of Ontario, Canada enacted a regulation in 2012 assigning responsibility for end-of-life management of pharmaceutical waste to manufacturers. Many European countries have industry-funded drug take back programs. While the company has published detailed social responsibility statements on issues like energy and water, it has not issued a position on this escalating policy area.

BE IT RESOLVED: Shareowners of AbbVie request that the board of directors issue a report, at reasonable expense and excluding proprietary information, reviewing the company's existing policies for safe disposition by users of prescription drugs to prevent water pollution, and setting forth policy options for a proactive response, including determining whether the company should endorse partial or full industry responsibility for take back programs by providing funding or resources for such programs.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT: Management may also consider other harms besides water pollution in evaluating take back programs, and whether, in addition to addressing disposition of prescription drugs, such programs should encompass accessories such as used needles and syringes.