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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Adopt Safe Drug Collection Program Ordinance

On June 21, 2016, the Board of Supervisors became the first County in Southern California to pass an Extended Producer Responsibility (“EPR”) ordinance which will provide a new program for residents to safely dispose of their unused household medications at pharmacies in Santa Barbara County.

The average American uses a dozen prescriptions per year, many of which go unused. Yet there are limited options for residents to safely dispose of unused medications. The accumulation of medication increases the opportunity for misuse, abuse and diversion. Further, improper disposal of medications pollutes our environment, including our water supply.

Third District Supervisor Doreen Farr, who has led local efforts to establish the program, stated, “This new program is critically important to protect the public health and safety of Santa Barbara County residents and our environment. This drug collection program will help reduce toxic pollutants in our water supply and decrease the availability of addictive drugs in our homes and community.”

Over the last year, a diverse group of local stakeholders County-wide have participated in community meetings to craft a convenient and sustainable collection program, including children and senior service providers, law enforcement agencies, environmental groups, pharmacists, water and waste management districts. All consistently indicated the urgent need for more convenient drug disposal options.

Drug manufacturers who conduct business in SBC will now be required to finance and operate the drug collection program. Over half a dozen other Counties in Northern California, as well as other jurisdictions nationally and globally, have also implemented producer responsibility ordinances. California has passed product stewardship laws for a variety of other products, including mattresses, mercury, thermostats, carpet and paint.

The new program will augment the current collection bins operated by the Sheriff’s office, also known as “Operation Medicine Cabinet.”

The development of the ordinance was a collaboration between a number of Santa Barbara County departments including Public Health, Sheriff’s Office, Public Works and County Counsel.

Based on the timelines within the new ordinance, new disposal options are expected to be available in approximately fifteen months from the date of passage.

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