



WHITMAN-WALKER HEALTH

Mailing Address:

Whitman-Walker (ETMC–Temporary Offices)

1342 Florida Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20009

BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

TESTIMONY OF WHITMAN-WALKER HEALTH ON BILL 22-228, SAFE DISPOSAL OF PHARMACEUTICALS AMENDMENT ACT OF 2017

Pursuant to the Committee’s Notice of Hearing, Whitman-Walker Health (WWH or Whitman-Walker) is pleased to submit this written testimony in support of Bill 22-228, the “Safe Disposal of Pharmaceuticals Amendment Act of 2017.”

As a federally qualified community health center with particular expertise in HIV treatment and prevention and in LGBT health, WWH provides the highest quality medical, dental and behavioral health care, legal assistance, and community health services to thousands of District residents. The Whitman-Walker Pharmacy is conveniently located at street level of our medical center on 14th Street NW, and is open to all in the community, regardless of whether they are Whitman-Walker patients. We also have plans to open a pharmacy at our Max Robinson Center, on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE.

In calendar year 2016, we provided health services to over 16,000 individuals and are projected to surpass that number this year. Many of our patients suffer from chronic illnesses and other comorbidities, which require them to manage multiple medications. Significant numbers of our patients are prescribed narcotics and other controlled substances from time to time, for pain control and for other medical reasons. In the absence of safe and convenient mechanisms to dispose of pharmaceuticals which are expired or no longer needed, these patients

and their family are at grave risk of accidental exposure or intentional misuse of unused and expired medications. Moreover, many of our patients have relatively low levels of health literacy, and may be at heightened risk of using expired or unneeded medications that have not been subjected to proper disposal. Moreover, if expired or unused pharmaceuticals are available in a patient's home, other family members or housemates may be at risk of consuming inappropriate, un-prescribed medications. Simply throwing unused medications in the trash, or flushing them in the toilet or down a drain, can be perilous to public health.

Our medical providers frequently are asked by patients how to safely dispose of medications they no longer need or that are expired. While safe medication disposal pouches are available at Whitman-Walker and in many medical offices, they are often unused because of miscommunication or the lack of knowledge to request them. Having safe, secure disposal repositories available in pharmacies will expand access to proper and anonymous mechanisms to dispose unwanted, unused, or expired medicines, prioritizing this serious public health hazard in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Guillaume Bagal, (202) 797-4421, gbagal@whitman-walker.org.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guillaume Bagal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel Bruner, JD, MPP, Senior Director of Policy
Guillaume Bagal III, MA, MHA, Public Policy Associate

September 28, 2017