



Date: January 26, 2012

To: Members, Senate Environment and Energy Committee

From: Randy Minniear, Senior Vice President, Government Relations & Policy
Jessica M. Cohen, Director, Government Relations & Policy
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Cc: Kevil Duhon, Senate Democratic Office
Brian Alpert, Senate Republican Office
Judith Horowitz, Office of Legislative Services

Re: **S-81 - Prohibits health care institutions from discharging medications into sewer or septic systems**

On behalf of our nearly 400 hospital, post-acute and business members, NJHA would like to offer its comments on **S-81**, sponsored by Sen. Bateman (R-Somerville). This legislation would prohibit healthcare institutions from discharging medications into sewer or septic systems.

The discharging of medication into the public wastewater or sewage system is a practice that we all must work together to eliminate. The harmful effect that these chemicals can have on the environment is difficult to measure. However, the disposing of unused medication is an issue that goes beyond the effects that the medication can have on the environment. A substantial amount of medication is wasted everyday using proper disposal procedures, while many uninsured patients go without the same medication to treat their conditions.

At the urging of Sen. Turner (D-Trenton) and the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens committee, NJHA has been participating on a taskforce that is studying how to facilitate the reuse of unexpired medication. Specifically, the taskforce has looked at other states that have established repositories that are charged with collecting unused medication and repackaging it in a safe and effective way to redistribute to indigent patients. This idea, combined with the piece of legislation before this committee, should move together through the legislative process in order to provide a comprehensive solution to this problem.

In addition, some of our facilities have raised questions about the disposal of non-hazardous pharmaceuticals (as determined by federal standards), such as cough syrup, saline or other benign solutions in IV bags. It appears that according to this legislation, these liquids would now be required to be separately packed and disposed. This could be costly and time consuming for many facilities that already follow federal guidelines with respect to disposing hazardous materials. As such, we would respectfully request an exemption for these types of non-hazardous liquids described above.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on **S-81**. We look forward to working with the sponsor on this piece of legislation moving forward. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (609) 275-4251 if you have any questions or concerns.