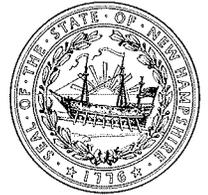




The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

January 25, 2011

The Honorable John Reagan, Chairman
Health, Human Services, and Elderly Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 205
Concord, NH 03301

SUBJECT: HB 163, An act establishing the medical sharps advisory council on disposal of medical sharps.

Dear Chairman Reagan and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 163. This legislation seeks to establish a Medical Sharps Advisory Council for the purpose of assessing options for providing safe, secure, and accessible collection and disposal methods for household generated hypodermic needles and lancets, also known as “medical sharps.” The Council would also monitor progress being made in other states regarding safe and secure medical sharps disposal, encourage stakeholder collaboration, and advise the legislature on related matters and issues of concern.

Nationally, over 3 billion medical sharps are disposed of each year. With the increase in home health care and new injectable pharmaceuticals, homeowners are increasingly faced with the difficult task of properly and safely disposing of sharps generated in their home environment. Medical sharps placed in the household trash put other members of the household and workers at transfer stations, incinerators, and landfills at risk of injury, due to what is commonly referred to as “needle sticks.” Needle sticks can result in worker’s compensation costs and the possible acquisition of blood-borne diseases. The risk of needle sticks due to improper or inadequate disposal methods also extends to janitorial workers, hospitality workers, and all citizens at restaurants, airports, hotels, stores, and all public places. Similarly, disposal of sharps by flushing into toilets leads to costly maintenance issues when sharps are caught in sewage treatment plant equipment and places plant workers at risk when attempting to remove the sharps from the equipment. Flushing has also resulted in the syringes being found as litter on public beaches near sewer outfalls.

The Department of Environmental Services (Department) served on the Medical Sharps Commission that was established in 2008. The Commission was charged with evaluating options for safe disposal of medical sharps and providing consumer education. In its final report issued in November 2010, the Commission recommended that “...a coalition of commission members be formed to continue to monitor program options for the collection and disposal of home-generated sharps.” The report further stated that the “monitoring of progress in other states will direct future legislation away from failures and encourage collaboration with successful programs. Sharps manufacturers, states agencies, and other stakeholders, via the coalition, can facilitate advocacy for source reduction, streamlined disposal options, possible

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[sic] create a sustainable funding model, and brainstorm methods for outreach within the coalition venue.”

The Department encourages passage of HB 163 in order to provide a structured forum for stakeholders to continue collaborating and working on solutions for assuring the safe, secure, and accessible collection and disposal of medical sharps in order to help protect public health, safety, and the environment.

If you have any questions regarding this letter of testimony, please do not hesitate to contact Pamela Hoyt-Denison, Waste Programs Administrator, at 271-2945, or me at 271-2958.

Sincerely,

Thomas Burack
Thomas Burack
Commissioner

cc: Michael J. Wimsatt, P.G., Director, Waste Management Division
Pamela Hoyt-Denison, P.E., Waste Programs Administrator