

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Helps introduce bipartisan legislation to allow safe disposal of unwanted drugs in hospice

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined a bipartisan group of senators to introduce the *Safe Disposal of Unused Medication Act of 2018* to respond to one aspect of the heroin and opioid abuse epidemic that is harming communities and families across the country. This bipartisan legislation would address the problem of unused prescription drugs when a patient is receiving hospice care at home.

“Fighting this nationwide epidemic is a shared responsibility and so we must do everything we can to improve the safety and quality of pain management services and to ensure that our health providers have the tools they need to deliver safe care,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “This is a commonsense fix that would allow our hospice workers to safely dispose of these potentially dangerous medications after they are no longer needed. I’m proud to join this bipartisan effort to continue advancing solutions that will help combat opioid abuse and save lives.”

Under current federal regulations, hospice staff are not allowed to dispose of unused medications, even after the patient has died. As a result, dangerous medications with a high risk of diversion, theft and abuse are frequently left in the deceased person’s home.

The Safe Disposal of Unused Medication Act would permit hospice staff (physicians

and registered nurses) or emergency medical services professionals to dispose of controlled substances when a patient dies or a medication expires and requires:

- Qualified hospice programs to have a written policy and procedure for drug disposal in place to be distributed to a patient's family;
- Hospice employees, defined as doctors or registered nurses, to hold a mandatory conversation with a patient's family member or representative about drug disposal policies when a controlled substance is first ordered; and
- All drug disposals to be documented in the clinical record.

The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) sent a letter in support of the Senators' legislation. "Your legislation works to address the challenges faced by hospice programs related to disposal of controlled substances and signals a clear understanding of the need for 'real world' solutions to enable willing hospice providers to reduce the potential for diversion or misuse of controlled substances in patients' places of residence," **wrote NAHC President William Dombi.**

In addition to Senator Baldwin, the bill was introduced by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

A one-pager on the bill can be found [here](#).

The text of the bill can be found [here](#).