

State sues Purdue Pharma over opioid epidemic

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Flanked by lawmakers, law enforcement officials and advocates, AG Josh Kaul and Gov. Tony Evers announced the state has filed a lawsuit alleging subsidiaries of Purdue Pharma fueled the opioid epidemic by employing “deceptive” marketing and sales techniques.

Wisconsin is one of five states — along with Iowa, Kansas, Maryland and West Virginia — who today filed separate lawsuits in state court against Purdue Pharma entities and its founders, the Sackler family.

Kaul said during Thursday’s announcement the state is suing Purdue Pharma L.P., Purdue Pharma Inc. and former chairman and president Richard Sackler. He claimed the opioid epidemic “was not inevitable” and is “in part attributable to the deceptive marketing practices” employed by Purdue and Sackler.

“We allege that the risks of opioid addiction and the risks of overdose were downplayed and that the benefits of opioids were overstated in an effort to change the culture regarding the prescription of opioids,” Kaul said.

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Evers, meanwhile, said it was for Purdue to “be held accountable to the people who have suffered at the hands of these decisions and dishonesty.”

“Purdue and the Sackler family led consumers and the healthcare community to believe the myth that opioids were the best way to treat chronic pain. That’s wrong,” he said.

The suit alleges that in response to concerns about opioid abuse, Purdue rolled out an “aggressive marketing campaign” with two goals: to boost sales of its opioid

painkiller OxyContin and change accepted norms within the medical community about opioid prescribing.

Purdue Frederick, a subsidiary of Purdue Pharma, pled guilty in 2007 to a federal felony and more than paid \$634.5 million in penalties based on marketing practices intended to “defraud and mislead.”

But the DOJ’s complaint alleges after that settlement, Purdue continued to push “false, deceptive and misleading marketing practices” while downplaying risks in an effort to maximize profits.

Wisconsin is already involved in several multistate investigations, including one announced by Former AG Brad Schimel in 2017 probing opioid manufacturers and another Kaul joined in March looking into opioid distributors.

See the release [here](#).

See the [complaint](#).