

Non-profit urges big pharma to take responsibility for drug take back programs

By Nicole Gray | April 27, 2016

Dive Brief:

- The non-profit "**As You Sow**" is spearheading an effort to make pharmaceutical companies responsible for disposal of unused drugs, with support from socially responsible investment funds. Some of the funds involved in this effort include Friends Fiduciary, Walden Asset Management and Newground Social Investment.
- **As You Sow** recently sent a letter to the heads of ten pharmaceutical firms on behalf of the funds asking the companies to issue policy statements on drug take back programs. These programs are designed to reduce environmental contamination and lower the risk of prescription drug abuse from unused drugs.
- A number of local governments in California and Washington have passed laws requiring drugmakers to pay for the program, reports Stat. Other jurisdictions are considering similar legislation.



Dive Insight:

After Alameda County in California passed a take-back drug program in 2012 and forced pharma companies to finance it, a group of biotech and pharma companies filed a complaint with the Supreme Court alleging the the program was unconstitutional. But the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Alameda County last year.

California tends to be on the forefront of many environmental/community-based movements, and this is no exception. Other states are following suit, including Massachusetts.

The non-profit **As You Sow** is building on this local interest and hopes to force companies to address the disposal problem. In its letter, the group asks for companies to develop policies on the take back of unused drugs.

"We believe that companies that put medications on the market and profit from them should be primarily responsible for take back," wrote the group. "We believe it's time for the industry to manage the end of life portion of the product life cycle in the same manner that it manages design and marketing of its goods and services."

As You Sow sent the letter to ten major pharmaceutical with the support of 22 socially-conscious investment funds.

In addition, **As You Sow** has proposed shareholder resolutions requiring that Merck, Johnson & Johnson and AbbVie pay for the take-back programs. The reception from the three companies has been relatively cold, with all three drugmakers recommending shareholders vote against the proposals, according to Stat.

But growing pressure from governments and lawmakers could push drugmakers to collaborate with communities, although it appears companies will resist outright responsibility for take back programs.

Recommended Reading

statnews.com: [Pharma pushed by investment funds to pay for drug take-back programs](#)

<http://www.biopharmadive.com/news/non-profit-urges-big-pharma-to-take-responsibility-for-drug-take-back-progr/418199/>