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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO OPIOIDS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that opioids are a class  
2 of drugs that includes the illegal drug heroin, synthetic  
3 opioids such as fentanyl, and prescription pain relievers, such  
4 as oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and morphine. These drugs  
5 are chemically related and interact with opioid receptors on  
6 nerve cells in the body and brain. The legislature further  
7 finds that opioid pain relievers are generally safe when taken  
8 for a short time as prescribed by a physician. However, regular  
9 use of opioid pain relievers, even as prescribed by a physician,  
10 can lead to dependence. Moreover, because opioid pain relievers  
11 produce euphoria in addition to pain relief, they are very prone  
12 to misuse. The misuse of opioid pain relievers can easily lead  
13 to overdose incidents and deaths.

14           The legislature further finds that the Centers for Disease  
15 Control and Prevention formally declared an opioid epidemic in  
16 2011. According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine,  
17 more than 2,500,000 Americans have an opioid-use disorder. The  
18 opioid epidemic is the deadliest drug crisis in United States



1 history, with drug overdoses claiming more lives in 2016 than  
2 motor vehicle accidents or gun violence. Stated otherwise, the  
3 opioid epidemic is tantamount to a new 9/11 attack every three  
4 weeks.

5 At the heart of the opioid epidemic is OxyContin, which is  
6 a brand name available for the prescription pain killer,  
7 oxycodone. OxyContin is a dangerous and deadly opioid that was  
8 developed in the 1990's by Purdue Pharma, which is based in  
9 Stamford, Connecticut and is owned and operated by the Sackler  
10 family. The Sacklers are best known as philanthropists whose  
11 family name is prominently featured in exhibits at a number of  
12 prominent institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of  
13 Art, Harvard University, and the Louvre. Because the Sacklers  
14 have managed to write their family name out of the history of  
15 the family business, most visitors to these establishments are  
16 unaware that the family made their fortune by being one of the  
17 prime beneficiaries of the current epidemic of opioid use.

18 As detailed in an article published in *The New Yorker* on  
19 October 30, 2017, the Sacklers' great wealth was earned at the  
20 expense of the millions of people who have fallen prey to drug  
21 addiction due to OxyContin's intrinsic addictive properties, of



1 which the Sacklers were well aware, but denied any knowledge.  
2 As noted, the Sacklers launched OxyContin with a multi-faceted  
3 marketing campaign that misinformed doctors about the risks of  
4 opioids, which included addiction and death. In September 2017,  
5 the attorneys general of forty-one U.S. states banded together  
6 to investigate the role these deceptive marketing campaigns on  
7 the part of opioid manufacturers and distributors, including  
8 Purdue Pharma, in the current crisis of opiate addictions and  
9 overdose deaths.

10 Meanwhile, in April 2016, Congress, yielding to pressure  
11 from the drug industry, passed a law that effectively stripped  
12 the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of its most  
13 potent weapon against large drug companies suspected of spilling  
14 prescription narcotics onto the nation's streets. By that time,  
15 the opioid crisis had surged into the deadliest drug epidemic in  
16 United States history, having claimed 200,000 lives, more than  
17 three times the number of United States military deaths in the  
18 Vietnam War.

19 Prior to the passage of The Ensuring Patient Access and  
20 Effective Drug Enforcement Act of 2016, the DEA had broad  
21 authority to freeze suspicious narcotic shipments from drug



1 distribution companies, as long as the shipment posed an  
2 "imminent danger" to the community. The DEA used this authority  
3 to immediately prevent drugs from reaching the streets. The new  
4 law requires the DEA to demonstrate that a company's action  
5 represents "a substantial likelihood of an immediate threat,"  
6 which is a much higher bar. As a result, it is now virtually  
7 impossible for the DEA to freeze suspicious opioid shipments.  
8 The higher standard has severely undermined the DEA's previously  
9 aggressive enforcement efforts.

10 Accordingly, in this regulatory vacuum of effective federal  
11 law enforcement efforts against the drug epidemic, the several  
12 states have no choice but to step up their own efforts to combat  
13 the epidemic through multi-faceted attacks, such as requiring:

- 14 (1) Warnings to accompany opioid prescriptions;
- 15 (2) More comprehensive health insurance coverage for the  
16 treatment of opioid dependence;
- 17 (3) Data collection on opioid overdoses and deaths; and
- 18 (4) Lowest possible dosage levels for prescriptions.

19 The purpose of this Act is to require a health care  
20 professional or pharmacist who dispenses any opioid drug to  
21 include on the drug's package a specific warning label.



1 SECTION 2. Chapter 329, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by adding a new section to part III to be appropriately  
3 designated and to read as follows:

4 "§329- Opioid warning label. In addition to any  
5 requirements for labeling of drugs under part I of chapter 328,  
6 part III of this chapter, and any other requirement for labeling  
7 of prescription drugs pursuant to state or federal law, a health  
8 care professional or pharmacist who dispenses any opioid drug  
9 shall include on the drug's package a warning label that  
10 contains wording substantially similar to the following warning:

11 "Caution: Opioid. Risk of overdose and addiction."

12 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

13 SECTION 4. This Act does not affect rights and duties that  
14 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were  
15 begun before its effective date.

16 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;  
17 provided that the warning label requirement established by this  
18 Act shall be implemented commencing August 1, 2018.



**Report Title:**

Opioid; Warning Label

**Description:**

Requires the inclusion of a label warning of the risks of addiction and death on the packaging of any opioid drug dispensed by a health care professional or pharmacist. (HB1602 CD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

