



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Files Charges Against Opioid Manufacturer Purdue Pharma and Related Entities *Charges Allege Companies Engaged in Deceptive Marketing Scheme to Increase Profits*

BALTIMORE, MD (May 30, 2019) - Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that his office has [filed charges](#) against opioid manufacturers Purdue Pharma, L.P., Rhodes Pharmaceuticals, and related entities, alleging the companies engaged in a scheme to market prescription opioids through unfair and deceptive trade practices. Purdue manufactures MS Contin, Dilaudid, Butrans, Hysingla, and OxyContin, among others, while Rhodes manufactures generic opioids. The alleged scheme involves marketing opioid for use far in excess of any medical need, leading hundreds of thousands of Marylanders to become addicted to prescription opioids and thousands to die from opioid overdoses.

The new charges follow charges filed [last week](#) against members of the Sackler family who owned, directed, and controlled Purdue and Rhodes and their opioid sales and marketing practices. According to the charges, Purdue and the Sacklers conducted an orchestrated marketing scheme designed to mislead Maryland healthcare providers, patients, insurers, officials, and others about the benefits of opioids generally and Purdue opioids specifically, while downplaying their risks, which include opioid-induced hyperalgesia (or worsening of pain), addiction, and death. The State alleges, among other things, the unfair and deceptive marketing campaigns included misleading prescribers that patients would not become addicted by telling them that common symptoms associated with addiction - such as misrepresenting pain symptoms and using illicit drugs like cocaine and heroin - were merely signs of “pseudoaddiction” that could be addressed by increasing doses - and Purdue’s profits. According to the Statement of Charges, in making sales calls, Purdue ignored warning signs of problematic prescribing by Maryland prescribers, calling upon pain management clinics that Purdue knew or had reason to know were not engaged in practices that could not be justified as serving their patients’ legitimate medical need. Purdue even allegedly recruited problem prescribers as speakers, paying them to promote Purdue’s opioids even after becoming aware of problematic prescribing.

“The charges describe a pattern of deception designed to sell life-threatening medicines without regard to the risk posed to the patients who consumed them,” said Attorney General Frosh. “We allege that Purdue and its related entities inflicted devastating harm, and in many cases irreversible harm, on patients and their families.”

The Statement of Charges seeks an order restraining Purdue and Rhodes from further violations of the State's Consumer Protection Act, monetary penalties for each violation, and disgorgement of all revenue the companies received from unlawful conduct.

Opioid Crisis Impact in Maryland

According to the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), opioid-related fatalities increased in 2017 for the seventh year in a row, reaching an all-time high of 2,009 deaths. This represents an increase of nearly 300% since 2010, when there were 504 reported opioid-related deaths. Because not all opioid-related deaths are detected, these figures likely understate the real numbers. For the first nine months of 2018, which is the most recent data for which the MDH has final statistics, the number of opioid-related deaths in Maryland once again climbed, with 1,648 deaths reported from January through September 2018, compared to 1,502 during the same period in 2017. Maryland ranks among the top five states for the highest rates of opioid-related overdose deaths.