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Legislators hear about strategies to control microplastic waste

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Kentucky is a leader in the bourbon and horse industries. It could also become a pacesetter in innovative strategies to control microplastic waste, according to a committee discussion on Sept. 3.

Sen. Brandon Smith, R-Hazard, said the topic of microplastics is expected to be broached more in the future. Smith and other legislators on the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy received testimony about efforts to combat the waste.

“It’s going to become a very big thing, and one of the reasons Kentucky is looking into it is because we’re really leading the way,” Smith said. “We were one of the first states to file a piece of legislation to help direct it and get some ideas and boundaries for it. It is certainly not going to go away.”

Jian Shi is a professor in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering at the University of Kentucky’s Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture. He testified about efforts underway at UK to remove microplastics from water using a special solvent.

Shi said microplastics are a global level-issue because they can move from the water, through



Sen. Brandon Smith, R-Hazard, speaks Sept. 3 during the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy meeting. Smith is co-chair of the committee.

the rain, through rivers and to varying places, including into the human body.

“The particle size of plastics, when it becomes smaller, it becomes even more challenging because it’s hard to take out from the water,” he said.

Shi said filtration and centrifugation become inefficient or expensive at very small particle sizes. Large plastic is easy to capture. But microplastics are more difficult, and nanoplastics are extremely

difficult to capture.

A liquid solvent that works well and is easily available from plant-derived ingredients is used in green solvent extraction, he said.

One way of extracting nanoparticles with green solvents is suspending plastic particles in water, adding the green solvent and mixing the liquids. Ultimately, the plastic moves from the water into the solvent.

Shi said microplastics and nanoplastics are concerning for the ecosystem and human health because particles can be found in tap water, bottled water and food.

“This has been a concern from the scientific community because it’s possible microplastic or nanoplastic particles will get carried through small living things and to fish and to crab and eventually go to human bodies,” he said.

Shi said the particles can also make their way to wastewater treatment plants and end up in tap water.

Rep. John Blanton, R-Salyersville, asked Shi when the green solvents would be applied to

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Microplastic waste,

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remove the plastics.

Shi said right now, he thinks this would most likely take place at wastewater treatment plants.

Blanton said when he first heard about the miniscule plastics, he thought of water bottles. But he said he also realized that most homes and water systems use plastic pipes to transfer water.

Shi said most microplastics stem from discarded items that end up in waste streams – some of them winding up in water and soil where the plastics become smaller and smaller. He said polyvinyl

chloride pipes can also be a source of microplastics.

Rep. Adam Moore, D-Lexington, asked Shi about lignin-based hydrophobic deep eutectic solvents' (HDES) performance to combat the tiny plastics. This method can reach a high removal efficiency, Shi said.

"It's a very active research area now, looking to different ways of removing those micro- and nanoplastics from the water. The method I showed you is one-step removal, which is 95%. If you want to shoot for higher removal, it's likely going to be multi-stage, the separation process," Shi said.

Smith said not only are people wondering how prevalent the particles are in their bodies, but also how industries are looking at their bottom line and possible regulation.

"We've seen a lot of pop-up companies saying that they can do this in large scale, and I'm very skeptical because this stuff is extremely slippery," he said. "And it's everywhere and that's something about it. You can be someone who's been very, very cautious and watch what you've eaten and you still are going to have probably as much of it as I do because it's in so many things that we touch every day."

Lawmakers hear testimony on injectable buprenorphine in jails

By Stephanie Newberg- LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — One county jail is seeing benefits of long-acting injectables compared with daily oral medication for opioid use disorder, according to testimony heard by the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government on Sept. 15.

Boyd County Jailer William Hensley testified that, in the two years that his jail has been using the long-acting injectable form of buprenorphine, the facility has experienced improved safety, reduced recidivism and a reduction in operational costs.

He said the program is being funded by a \$422,000 state opioid abatement grant and does not draw from the county's general fund.

Although Hensley said the medication's cost, around \$1,500 per shot, may cause "sticker shock," the expense is reduced when considering administrative and other hidden costs associated with administering medications daily.

Also testifying was Joyce Johnson, Clinical Director of Outpatient Services for StepWorks, a Kentucky-based addiction treatment organization. Johnson said the initial cost of the drug is more expensive than the oral formulation, but that the staff savings "is significant."



Sen. Greg Elkins, R-Winchester, speaks during the Sept. 15 meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government. The committee was receiving testimony on the use of injectable buprenorphine in county jails.

Purchasing wholesale and non-patient specific drugs can also result in additional savings, according to the presentation.

Johnson described buprenorphine as "a medication that activates and blocks certain brain receptors that are responsive to opiates." She said the drug is one of three FDA-approved medications for opiate use disorder.

According to Hensley, the jail has seen significant operational cost savings with injectables versus daily oral medication. He explained that between moving inmates and conducting searches, each daily oral dose is a 45-minute process per inmate.

"With the injectable," he said "they get the shot once a month. There's no chance of diversion, and the staff is not having to move them back and forth."

Hensley added that injectables "almost eliminate diversion," further improving inmate safety.

Johnson said the StepWorks program, which combines the once-a-month

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injection with group counseling and peer-led reentry, has seen a recidivism rate of only 2%, compared with Kentucky's average recidivism in incarceration rate of 30.81%.

Johnson said the risk of post-release overdose fatality is 120 times higher for ex-inmates who are not using a long-acting injectable like buprenorphine.

Sen. Scott Madon, R-Pineville, asked about follow-up that inmates receive post-release.

"I have a full-time peer support specialist," Hensley said. "They assist with IDs, birth certificates, drivers' licenses and Social Security cards for everyone. They do follow-ups. They link them up for treatment, and once they get out, they do a 30-, 60-, 90-day follow-up."

Rep. Sarah Stalker, D-Louisville, called the information "positive and exciting," and asked whether the injectable medication had any negative effects or side effects compared with the oral formulation.

Johnson said that people experience redness and swelling at the injection site, "but as far as overall medication side effects or adverse effects, there's no difference between the oral medication and the injectable."

Regarding which inmates are eligible to receive the drug and for how long, Sen. Greg Elkins, R-Winchester, asked "Is there a time when you look at someone's sentence and say 'You don't qualify?'"

"Our medical professionals make that decision," Hensley said. "The medical company looks at their prescription, their needs, and they make the decision to keep me from having to make a rule that's a medical decision."

Lawmakers consider more regulations for automated license plate readers

By Jordan Hensley - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — An update to a new state law regulating automated license plate readers is being considered by Kentucky lawmakers.

House Bill 58 officially became law in Kentucky in July. The law regulates law enforcement's use of ALPRs.

The Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary discussed the need for more regulations as the technology evolves during its Sept. 3 meeting. Several ALPR stakeholders were invited to speak on the technology's use and the various privacy concerns, including Flock Safety.

Kevin Kane, the director of governmental affairs for Flock Safety, said the company "was pleased" about HB 58.

"As the committee is aware, ALPRs have become a vital tool for law enforcement investigations, but we also believe it must be used in concert with strong policy and guardrails," he said.

Kane also stated Flock doesn't own, control or sell the data collected by the cameras. The company is also in the process of requiring law en-



Sen. Danny Carroll, R-Paducah, advocates for law enforcement's use of automated license plate readers, while also recognizing regulation is needed to ensure privacy. Carroll made these comments during Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary meeting on Sept. 3.

forcement agencies to include a case code when accessing data, he said.

"Every single search is preserved permanently in an audit trail available for oversight," he said. "For additional transparency and oversight, Flock also provides our customers with an audit assist

tool to guard against misuse and further strengthen this oversight."

Additionally, Kane said Flock does not use facial recognition.

"The bottom line is that ALPR data is simply images of vehicles used for legitimate law enforcement purposes and then deleted permanently," he added. Those law enforcement uses include locating stolen vehicles and identifying and locating murder suspects.

Several lawmakers had questions for Kane, including Rep. T.J. Roberts, R-Burlington.

Roberts asked if Flock "is prepared to adopt operating procedures" to ensure that data cannot be accessed by public agencies without a search warrant.

Kane said Flock follows the law.

On the technological capabilities of Flock cameras, Roberts also commented on the future facial recognition capability of the tech. He said he located a U.S. patent registered by Flock regarding facial recognition.

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Legislators discuss housing challenges with business advocates

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Kentucky lawmakers on Sept. 17 posed questions to business advocates who offered testimony on housing challenges across the state.

During an Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment meeting, two officials from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce gave the legislators an overview about the housing shortage they say threatens economic development.

According to the chamber's presentation, the number of newly built homes declined after the Great Recession, leading to an imbalance between supply and demand. The shortage is approximately 200,000 units.

"Not surprising, this is about the economy. This is about economic development," said Kate Shanks, senior vice president of public affairs for the chamber.

Shanks said some Kentucky residents have said they don't think their communities could necessarily support business expansion due to housing shortages.

"So, we wanted to know how important home ownership is in the equation or the calculation about obtaining the American dream. And in fact, the vast majority said yes, homeownership is a part of the American dream in Kentucky, about 91% overall," she said.

Committee co-chair, Sen. Phillip Wheeler, R-Pikeville, asked how Kentucky can get more balanced growth across the state.

"Isn't this, to a large extent, a Golden Triangle and Bowling Green problem? I mean, I've got all kinds of houses for sale that if you dropped a company with 100 jobs, we could fill the housing needs for every single one of those in my community," he said.

Shanks said residents in some communities reported that they could meet the businesses' demands with existing housing. She said she also wants to see growth throughout Kentucky. It's not just a Golden Triangle situation because other areas of the state have challenges, she said.



Rep. Al Gentry, D-Louisville, speaks Sept. 17 during the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment meeting in the Capitol Annex.

Rep. Al Gentry, D-Louisville, said he started "flipping" houses and has noticed a great deal of money flowing into the housing market from private equity and corporations.

Charles Aull, vice president of policy for the chamber, said the issue of institutional investors is a relatively new market, and he didn't hear a great deal about it during information-gathering sessions. He said this issue isn't large enough to compete with the "dramatic" slowdown in homebuilding.

Rep. Thomas Huff, R-Shepherdsville, said he operates a car lot, and the business branched out to buy and sell recreational campers. He said approximately 13 customers told him they were going to live in the campers.

Rep. Kevin Jackson, R-Bowling Green, pointed to a collaboration in his district between three groups and a local school district to build approxi-

mately 1,100 housing units – single family houses, condominiums and apartments, along with a new elementary school.

"Maybe this can be a project across the state, but it's collaboration of those four organizations to try to come up with some affordable housing," he said.

Rep. Nima Kulkarni, D-Louisville, said she doesn't want regulations to be removed that would impact public safety and building safety.

Rep. Matt Lockett, R-Nicholasville, said he has two children, and he's concerned about the cost of rent and inflation that affects new construction. He highlighted a sudden rent hike that his son faced while renting a house with friends in college.

"They increased the rent in one year by \$400, up to \$2,000 per month for this terrible, awful home. Why did they do that – because they could, because people are paying for it," he said.

Legislators receive overview of Meta legal settlement

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Kentucky lawmakers on Sept. 15 learned about details surrounding a legal settlement between the commonwealth and Meta technology company that's expected to result in at least \$358 million in payments to the state.

During a meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Health Services, two officials from the Kentucky Office of the Attorney General explained how the case originated, what Meta must do now and how the multistate consent judgment measured against New Mexico's trial judgment.

They also discussed what Kentucky is expected to be paid and how the general assembly is connected to the settlement. Meta owns and operates Facebook, Instagram and other applications.

"Nationwide, monetary was just short of \$17 billion. Kentucky will receive a guaranteed payment of \$358 million and change with a contingent payment of \$154 million and change that can come at a later date," said Chris Lewis, division chief for consumer and senior protection for the attorney general's office.

Lewis said the payments will be coming in \$35.8 million increments with the first payment arriving at the end of this month and the second coming in January. Payments will follow in January each year after that, he said.

Under the settlement, Meta must have more accurate age assurance for users under 18 and require greater detection of those under 13 who "often fake accounts that are legally not supposed to be on the platform," Lewis said.

The settlement also calls for time management tools – most likely the flagship is a nighttime block that will be in place during hours when adolescents should be sleeping – when a lot of mental health issues come up due to sleep deprivation, he said.

There will also be an option for a nonalgorithmic, nonpersonalized feed to stop what is colloquially called "doomscrolling," and social comparison will be limited and eliminated in some instances.

"Likes" will not be available for adolescent users. Additionally, cosmetic filters – ones that mimic cosmetic surgery and have been known to cause body

dysmorphic problems with adolescents – will be blocked for underaged users, Lewis said.

"Also, increased parental supervision tools are going to be in place and more accessible, and I think the main thing for all of us is going to be the final piece, which was an independent auditor which Meta has agreed to, Meta will be paying for," he said. "And that auditor, for a period of five years will be monitoring their compliance, their efforts on this, and reporting back to a committee of six states."



The Interim Joint Committee on Health Services received an update Sept. 15 on the Meta legal settlement during a meeting in the Capitol Annex.

During the 2026 Regular Session, House Bill 686 was proposed to create the Kentucky Positive Youth Development Commission.

Committee co-chair, Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, R-Taylor Mill, said the bill will receive a new number in the upcoming session. It will call for a stakeholder group to complete needs assessments and determine needs for communities, she said.

Committee co-chair, Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, said it's important that the wellbeing of children is kept at the forefront.

"These funds are different from the opioid settlement in that it does go to the general fund. So, I think there's general consensus among all of our legislative mem-

bers to make sure these funds are used for the intended purpose of protecting our youth in mental health situations. This bill is one attempt to try to address that," he said.

Rep. Rebecca Raymer, R-Morgantown, said she agrees with the proposed bill and is "very supportive" of it.

Rep. Adrielle Camuel, D-Lexington, said social media, artificial intelligence and emerging technology are expanding rapidly and they affect every corner of Kentucky.

"There is not a child in the state who is not impacted in some way, and I just want to make sure we cover every bit of Kentucky to make sure we're doing everything we can to help all the kids," she said.

Legislators receive science education center proposal from advocates

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislators on the Interim Joint Committee on Education expressed interest Sept. 1 about boosting Kentucky's science education while hearing a proposal for the creation of the Kentucky Center for Science Education.

Lee Todd, president emeritus of the University of Kentucky, said the commonwealth needs the center to not only help students become successful, but also to provide a quality workforce that's well versed in science to meet expectations of companies.

"In this state, we have a center for reading. We have a center for math, and we're making progress in those areas. We're not making similar progress in science. And we have had experience with getting a grant to come up with really good ideas," he said.

Todd said grants come and go, and a science center would include a full-time staff dedicated to improving science education. The advocates asked for legislators to consider funding \$1 million for the center's launch and \$2 million for recurring operation.

"I've been told by the economic development secretary that there are some companies who won't even let us apply for them to move to Kentucky because we don't have a STEM-ready workforce," he said.

Lee said there are five workforce area needs according to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, and they all depend on people who can investigate, analyze data, communicate the evidence and solve problems. He said the way science can be taught takes you through that process.

Kim Zeidler-Watters, executive director of the Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform, said engaging students in ways science can be used in everyday life is vital.

She said the center would be a place to coach teachers and administrators by offering content-specific guidance on how to lead programs in schools and allow them to expand their skills. The infrastructure already exists for the center



Rep. James Tipton, R-Taylorsville, speaks Sept. 1 during the Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting. Tipton is co-chair of the committee.

to "hit the ground running on day one," she said.

"What we're asking is not a one-time workshop. What we're asking is something that's going to be sustained over time and allow teachers to get the kind of training and support that they need," she said.

Senate Minority Caucus Chair Reginald L. Thomas, D-Lexington, said he supports the proposed science center, but the problem is deeper. He suggested that students should learn about science in interesting ways beginning in the first grade.

"We talk a lot about reading, writing, arithmetic. But traditionally, we've never emphasized science," he said. "Now, in the last decade or so, I have to admit socially, we have focused on STEM and emphasized STEM education. But I was wondering if there is more we can do?"

Sen. Gex Williams, R-Verona, asked if cognitive thinking and critical analysis were being emphasized, and Zeidler-Watters answered affirmatively.

Committee co-chair, Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, said science was important when Lee started working at UK, but it's much more important today.

"We need STEM in order to improve the commonwealth economically and otherwise," he said.

Committee co-chair, Rep. James Tipton, R-Taylorsville, said something must be done to improve science education in Kentucky, and he encouraged all legislators to review test score data expected to be released in a few weeks by the Kentucky Department of Education.

"Look up the schools in your districts to see how they're doing in all areas, but particularly in science proficiency, because I have looked at that data. And we've got a lot of schools in the state where the science proficiency is under 10%. We've got a lot of work to do," he said. "And as Dr. Todd mentioned, if we're going to grow the economy in Kentucky, if we're going to provide jobs for workforce, we have to have an educated, well-trained workforce."



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Automated license plate readers, from page 3

Kane restated that the automated license plate readers do not utilize facial recognition technology.

Rep. Nima Kulkarni, D-Louisville, said she has similar data privacy concerns and questions about Flock's willingness to abide by the law.

She said she recognizes that Flock may not have certain capabilities now, but the company is working towards them. She asked Kane to confirm that Flock, a private company, is willing to abide by all the regulations and guardrails Kentucky may enact when it comes to its technology.

Kane said he "sees no reason" why Flock would not follow any future Kentucky laws regarding ALPRs or other tech.

On the topic of additional ALPR regulations, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Cato Institute advocated for lawmakers to pass more legislation next year to prevent mass government surveillance.

Kate Miller with the ACLU of Kentucky said Kentucky should be "really thoughtful" about the data retention aspect of ALPR usage.

The ACLU recommends data to be deleted within 48 hours instead of 90 days, as the law currently states. The ACLU also recommends independent agencies provide annual and routine audits into how law enforcement is using and accessing the data.

Sen. Danny Carroll, R-Paducah, said he supports the use of ALPRs by law enforcement, but agrees the technology needs regulations.

"This is a tool that will save lives and solve crimes, and that's the way we need to approach it," Carroll said. "Do we need to find out and research and make decisions on what the parameters are on how it's used? Absolutely ... I would just ask we don't condemn the tool. We condemn the improper use of it."

House Majority Whip Jason Nemes, R-Middletown, also recognized the benefits of the technology for law enforcement while also advocating for a search warrant requirement.

"I don't know why we wouldn't require a warrant unless there's exigent circumstances," he said. "That's the way we make sure our Fourth Amendment isn't destroyed."

Lawmakers cannot take action on legislation until the 2027 legislative session begins on Jan. 5.



Committee Meetings

Minutes for committees that met recently may be found at the following sites:

Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Banking and Insurance:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/B&I/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Education:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Education/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCF&C/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Health Services:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCHS/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Judiciary/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc_Gov/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR_&_E/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on State Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/St_Gov/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Transportation:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes_all.html



2026 Interim

**LEGISLATIVE
RECORD**

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