

# Plaintiffs Unseal New Evidence Against Chain Pharmacies in Federal Opioid Litigation

*Lake and Trumbull Counties of Ohio lay out dispensing and distribution claims against Walgreens, CVS, Walmart, Rite Aid, and HBC Giant Eagle for their role in fueling the opioid epidemic*

**CLEVELAND** (May 27, 2020) -- Today, the Plaintiffs' Executive Committee (PEC) in the [National Prescription Opiate Litigation \(NPOL\)](#) filed an amended complaint in the Northern District of Ohio Court before Judge Dan Aaron Polster for Lake and Trumbull Counties against the pharmacy chain defendants – Walgreens, CVS, Walmart, Rite Aid, and HBC Giant Eagle.

This is the first time the plaintiffs have had the opportunity to detail the direct and impactful role these defendants played in the opioid epidemic as dispensers and distributors, creating a public nuisance. Lake and Trumbull counties were selected by Judge Polster as bellwether cases and set a trial date for May 24, 2021.

Overdose deaths have become the [leading cause of death](#) for Ohioans under the age of 55, and across all ages, more than two and a half times as many people die from drug overdoses as from car accidents.

Plaintiffs' Executive Committee co-leads Paul T. Farrell Jr. of Farrell Law; Paul J. Hanly Jr. of Simmons Hanly Conroy; and Joe Rice of Motley Rice LLC said:

“Today, the public has its first chance to see extensive evidence showing how pharmacy chains not only failed to be the last line of defense against a flood of opioid pills, but also accelerated the supply of opioids into communities. What we have discovered is that reckless behavior by pharmacy chains wasn't restricted to isolated cases, it was the norm. We are peeling back another layer of information to help the public understand the role these companies played in the opioid epidemic. This is just the beginning. Much more data exists and needs to be shared, including national pharmacy dispensing data. These defendants' actions - or inaction - encouraged the flow and diversion of opioids into an illegal secondary market that resulted in devastating consequences for residents and community officials. This case is about making sure communities get the resources necessary to address the public health crisis these pharmacy chains left behind. Resources are needed now more than ever as local leaders who are on the frontlines battling the opioid epidemic are now facing the added challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“The people in this county are resilient and united in our cause,” said John R. Hamercheck, President of the Board of Lake County Commissioners. “We are working together in ongoing efforts to battle the opioid epidemic and protect our friends, neighbors, and loved ones. We look forward to our day in court to seek accountability and pursue the resources needed to ensure our law enforcement, medical services, and treatment facilities have what they need to help us recover and rebuild.”

“Our community has overcome unprecedented challenges brought to our doorstep by the opioid epidemic,” said Mauro Cantalamessa, Trumbull County Commissioner. “We will emerge stronger, but our first responders and healthcare professionals around the county need to know we have their back. People in recovery and their families need support now. We are bringing our case to trial to secure relief funds and create changes in our health care system through this litigation so we can discover how this happened and make sure what happened to us and countless other American communities never occurs again.”

This is the third bellwether trial in the federal opioid litigation. An earlier jury trial, Case Track 1B (CT1B), will take place on November 9, 2020 in Judge Polster’s court involving the plaintiff counties of Summit and Cuyahoga in Ohio against pharmacy defendants. CT1B will only examine claims against pharmacies related to their role as distributors of opioids. A second bellwether trial (CT2) is set to move forward with a bench trial on October 19, 2020, with the plaintiffs Cabell County and City of Huntington, West Virginia against the distributor defendants – AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, and McKesson.

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