

Toledo sues opioid manufacturers, distributors

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**BY IGNAZIO MESSINA
BLADE STAFF WRITER**

Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson speaks at a press conference in which the city announced it is suing opioid manufacturers.

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The city of Toledo sued 24 opioid manufacturers and distributors Monday, Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson announced.

"It is designed to hold them responsible," the mayor said. "The goal is to recover our costs and to change the ways in which they prescribe and advertise these drugs."

Mayor Hicks-Hudson said city taxpayers have spent more than \$400,000 for Toledo firefighters to respond to opioid-related emergency calls this year.

"We have had enough of our community members suffering or dying of overdoses from the unfair distribution and marketing practices of these addictive drugs. The time is now to hold drug manufacturers and distributors accountable for their actions," Mayor Hicks-Hudson said.

The nearly 300 page lawsuit was filed in Lucas County Common Pleas Court.

Toledo City Council voted on Oct. 17 to hire two law firms, Climaco, Wilcox, Peca & Garofoli Co., LPA, and Napoli Shkolnik PLLC, to sue for opioid-related costs. The law firms represent several other cities, including Dayton and Parma, Ohio, in similar suits "arising out of the alleged fraudulent and negligent marketing and distribution of prescription drugs including hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, methadone, and related to the opioid epidemic affecting this community," council's ordinance said.

The city has a retainer agreement mandating the two law firms are only paid if they are successful in court, City Law Director Adam Loukx said.

The lawsuit is an attempt to "try to hold an industry that's frankly been irresponsible, responsible," Mr. Loukx said.

"We are here to recoup tax dollars to the taxpayers of Toledo, Ohio," said Scott Kalish, owner of Kalish Law Firm in Cleveland, which is involved in the case.

"The only way to get these manufactures and suppliers to the table, believe me, is through this last effort in the court system," he said.

The opioid crisis in Toledo has been an issue in the 2017 mayoral contest.

On Aug. 28, 2017, Toledo mayoral candidate Wade Kapszukiewicz, the Lucas County treasurer, said the city should join a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and suppliers.

"I'm glad the mayor finally supports my plan to fight the opioid epidemic, but for the sake of the city, I wish she would have agreed with me sooner," Mr. Kapszukiewicz said. "Just as she did with Lake Erie impairment, the mayor has adopted one of my proposals because she is running for office."

Contact Ignazio Messina at: imessina@theblade.com, [419-724-6171](tel:419-724-6171), or on Twitter [@IgnazioMessina](https://twitter.com/IgnazioMessina).