

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Representative Marvin Abney
House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island House of Representatives
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 7273

Dear Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the chance to send a letter supporting H 7273, a bill requiring insurance coverage for services provided by pharmacists that would have been covered if other practitioners offered those services. The bill also requires health plans to provide an adequate network of participating pharmacists. **HB 7273** ensures that patients have more time with their most accessible health care professional and better aligns with the role of pharmacists with their extensive education and training.

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 18 independent pharmacies in Rhode Island. These Rhode Island pharmacies filled 1 million prescriptions last year, impacting the lives of thousands of patients in your state.

Increased utilization of pharmacists' services has improved patient outcomes and reduced overall healthcare costs. Systematic reviews have indicated positive returns on investment when evaluating broader pharmacist services, with up to \$4 in benefits for every \$1 invested in clinical pharmacy services. **HB 7273** limits the proposed coverage for pharmacy services to the extent the policy provides benefits for identical services rendered by other providers, specifically physicians, advanced practice nurse or physician's assistant.

Within the next 10 years, the U.S. could see a shortage of over 55,000 primary care physicians.¹ In Rhode Island there are 13 areas that are designated as health professional shortage areas.² There are hundreds of pharmacists in Rhode Island who are ready to provide valuable healthcare services to these communities that have limited access to care.³ By realigning financial incentives and reimbursing pharmacists for their services similar to other health care professionals there will be greater access to the vital health care services pharmacists provide.

¹ Association of American Medical Colleges. 2019 UPDATE The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand Projections From 2017 To 2032. Available at: https://aamcblack.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/31/13/3113ee5c_a038-4c16-89af-294a69826650/2019_update_-_the_complexities_of_physician_supply_and_demand_-_projections_from_2017-2032.pdf

² Kaiser Family Foundation. Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Timeframe: as of September 30, 2019. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/stateindicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas/areashpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22collid%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Employment Statistics Query System. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/home>.

To the benefit of this realignment, substantial published literature documents the significant improvement to patient outcomes⁴ and reduction in health care expenditures⁵ when pharmacists are more optimally leveraged. Compilation of studies have found themes in these cost savings, including “decreased total health expenditures, decreased unnecessary care (e.g., fewer hospitalizations, emergency department [ED] visits, and physician visits), and decreased societal costs (e.g., missed or nonproductive workdays).”⁵ The adoption of **HB 7273** would result in Rhode Island joining other states, such as, Ohio, Colorado, California, and Wisconsin as national leaders in empowering the pharmacist to better provide valuable services to their communities. In states where such legislation has already been implemented, we are observing health plans, notably Medicaid Managed Care Organizations, recognizing the value of the pharmacist and investing in the services they provide.

In short, HB 7273 will ensure more patients have greater access to health care services provided by pharmacists while supporting the sustainability of local pharmacies in our communities.

NCPA commends and supports the Rhode Island Pharmacists Association in their advocacy for this bill. We appreciate the bill’s sponsor, Representative Casimiro, for championing this critical issue and urge this bill be approved by the full committee.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter or wish to discuss the issue in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact me at joel.kurzman@ncpa.org or (703) 600-1186.

Sincerely,



Joel Kurzman
Director, State Government Affairs
National Community Pharmacists Association

⁴ Giberson S, Yoder S, Lee MP. Improving Patient and Health System Outcomes through Advanced Pharmacy Practice. A Report to the U.S. Surgeon General. Office of the Chief Pharmacist. U.S. Public Health Service. Dec 2011. Available at: https://www.accp.com/docs/positions/misc/improving_patient_and_health_system_outcomes.pdf

⁵ Murphy EM, Rodis, JR, Mann HJ. Three ways to advocate for the economic value of the pharmacist in health care. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association. August 2020. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544319120303927>