

February 29, 2024

The Honorable Susan Donovan, Chair  
The Honorable Joshua Giraldo  
The Honorable Brandon C. Potter  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Room 101  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 7445 – PHARMACIES - TOBACCO CESSATION/ DRUG THERAPIES**

Chair Donovan and members of the House Health and Humans Services Committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 7874, a bill that authorizes pharmacists to prescribe and dispense nicotine replacement therapy medications. We **support** this legislation as it increases access to tobacco cessation treatment and removes barriers to access by mandating that public and private insurers cover these services.

NCPA represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and approximately eighteen independent community pharmacies in Rhode Island. These Rhode Island pharmacies filled over 1 million prescriptions last year, impacting thousands of patients in your state. Our members are small business owners who are among America's most accessible healthcare providers, and they provide an expanding set of health care services to millions of patients every day.

The decision to quit using tobacco products is often a spontaneous one, which means that increased access to care in settings close to and convenient for patients is key. Ninety percent of Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy, and pharmacies are often open nights and weekends, when other care settings are closed. Pharmacists are frequently referred to as the most accessible healthcare professional, as many patients can ask for advice and counseling regarding their health and medications without the requirement of an appointment. Pharmacists are the healthcare system's medication experts and are highly qualified to analyze and optimize medication regimens to lower costs and improve health. More importantly, pharmacists have demonstrated the ability to achieve quit rates like or higher than other healthcare professionals.<sup>1</sup> Fourteen other states have recognized pharmacists'

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.japha.org/article/S1544-3191\(18\)30001-3/fulltext#relatedArticles](https://www.japha.org/article/S1544-3191(18)30001-3/fulltext#relatedArticles)

ability to impact this public health issue and have authorized pharmacist prescribing of tobacco cessation aids.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, the pharmacy profession has evolved from a dispensing and product reimbursement industry to a profession with training and patient relationships to provide outcomes-based services and participate in care coordination efforts. Pharmacists' care has increasingly involved patient counseling and we have learned how their presence in underserved communities has seen improved health outcomes and reduced healthcare costs. The lack of adequate payment for these services prevents pharmacies from offering nicotine therapy products and reduces the access to care for many patients in the state. We applaud the mandatory coverage language in H 7445. Mandatory coverage provisions for pharmacists providing preventative health care services are paramount to the success of H 7445.

NCPA strongly supports the Rhode Island Pharmacists Association in their advocacy for this bill. We appreciate the bill's sponsor, Representative Tanzi, for championing this critical issue and urge approval from this committee.

Sincerely,



Joel Kurzman  
Director, State Government Affairs

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nasp.us/resource/tobacco-cessation/>