



# Rhode Island Pharmacists Association

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28 February 2024

[submitted electronically via: [HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov)]

The Honorable Susan Donovan Chair, House Committee on Health & Human Services  
State House  
82 Smith Street, Room 101  
Providence, RI 02903  
RE: H7445 (Tanzi)– An Act Relating to Businesses & Professions – Pharmacies - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Donovan and members of the Committee:

Rhode Island Pharmacists Association (RIPA) is writing to express **support** for [H7445](#). As a reminder, this bill passed the **entire House** under H5555, with a 65-0 vote in 2023 ([see roll call HERE](#)).

This bill would allow a Pharmacist to initiate FDA approved tobacco cessation drug therapies resulting in improved access, public health and patient care. Approximately **90% of the population is within 5 miles of a pharmacy**. This access would help to easily identify high risk patients, reduce attributed costs, referral to additional quit resources and access during off-hours where usual services and time is restricted to broad patient care. Additionally, it is well known that complete tobacco cessation can require in excess of **10-15 quit attempts and success is strongly correlated to how many touchpoints patients receive** through their attempts, often **weekly for several months**.

**Patients visit Pharmacies much more frequently each year (35 times) compared to their Primary Care Provider (4 times)**. See attached *"Rhode Island Tobacco Fact Sheet 2022"*

This increase in access via pharmacists in **all healthcare settings** can support patients who require frequent follow-up and **complement** those with established providers.

Many smokers purchase their quit smoking treatments from a pharmacy. Cost may be a deterrent for patients obtaining their over-the-counter medication. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [a bulletin in January 2017](#) that explicitly allows expansion of the prescribing authority for pharmacists and permitting standing orders for Medicaid enrollees. Allowing trained pharmacists to write prescriptions for the seven FDA-approved cessation medications, as outlined in House Bill 7445, can increase access to low- or no-cost treatments for Medicaid beneficiaries and other patients in Rhode Island. Increasing the number of smokers that quit, can save lives and save the state money.

**Fourteen other states** have recognized pharmacists' ability to impact this public health issue and have authorized pharmacist prescribing of tobacco cessation aids. It is well established that tobacco use can increase a person's risk of developing several conditions, including lung cancer, coronary artery disease, and stroke, as well as increase overall mortality. It is also important to address tobacco use during pregnancy because of complications including preterm delivery, low birth weight and other complications.

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National Community Pharmacists Association*

This is well within the profession's scope of knowledge and professional expertise, and it is common for **pharmacists to recommend/ or change medications based on potential drug-drug, or drug-disease interactions to ensure safety is the top priority in patient care.** Schools of Pharmacy require many weeks of education in pharmacy school on tobacco cessation and motivational interviewing. **Pharmacists also historically support the teaching of pharmacotherapy courses** for physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and medical schools to help support and build the essential knowledge of drug therapy and establish a collaborative nature during the critical years of education. Thus, Pharmacist's knowledge and collaboration as both independent providers and on a team is well established.

Many have referenced concern over use of medications other than Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT). However, the [EAGLES](#) trial published in 2016, lead to the **removal of a boxed warning for Chantix (varenicline) and Wellbutrin (bupropion SR)**, stating ***"The study did not show a significant increase in neuropsychiatric adverse events attributable to varenicline or bupropion relative to nicotine patch or placebo"***. This landmark trial of more than 8,000 participants helped to ease safety concerns for these medications in vulnerable populations.

**Lastly, as stated in prior years, the inclusion of payment for services delivered by a pharmacist will ensure this service occurs, provide staffing where applicable, and allow the necessary infrastructure to make an impact on public health.** Many other states which have not included payment up front, have gone on to see underutilization of these services, and little to no impact. **This service should be occurring by other providers but is not at a high rate due to access and delays in care, thus the budget impact in other states have been reduced to zero.**

**This bill will supplement and close gaps in care, not replace what is delivered by primary care or specialists.**

If passed The Board of Pharmacy Rules would state that a qualified pharmacist may tobacco cessation products to a patient. Standard screening can occur easily and in less than 15-30 minutes and completed based on a patient interview and allow for ease of counseling on other potential medication interactions which are routinely filled or visible within their pharmacy.

RIPA strongly encourages the Committee and full House to pass this bill **again**, help our patients and increase access to care.

Thank you, and we look forward to working together,



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# RHODE ISLAND'S PHARMACISTS

## IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF COMMUNITIES



Pharmacists are a valued member of the healthcare team and data shows that there is a need for pharmacist-provided patient care services. The potential impact of implementing programs that provide coverage for these services is great, improving health equity and access to care.

**Learn More!**



### QUALIFIED

### Pharmacists are Highly Qualified Healthcare Providers



#### 6+ YEARS

Courses focused on pharmacotherapy, patient education, disease management, and clinical decision-making.



#### LIGENSURE

Pharmacists take the North America Pharmacist Licensure Exam (NAPLEX) & Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Examination (MPJE).



#### ADDITIONAL EDUCATION

Many pharmacists complete Post-Graduate Residencies, Fellowships, and/or Board Certification in specialty areas.

As of 2004, all pharmacy school graduates earn the PharmD degree...a doctorate degree to reflect the increased complexity of pharmacotherapy and advanced training required for adequate provision of patient care.

### ACCESSIBLE

### Pharmacists are the Most Accessible Healthcare Professionals

**1,140**  
Pharmacists  
in Rhode Island<sup>1</sup>

**89%**

Americans live within 5 miles  
of a community pharmacy<sup>2</sup>

Annually, Americans visit  
their pharmacy

**35 times**

vs. 4 times  
at their primary care  
provider.<sup>3</sup>

Number of pharmacies is  
**15% higher**

than number of  
provider's offices  
in communities where more than  
30% of households live in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

### TEST & TREAT

Pharmacists and pharmacies are increasingly offering this public health service of test and treat to promote prevention, early detection, and disease management. Patients are referred when appropriate.

- COVID
- Strep
- Flu
- RSV
- UTI
- STI
- H. pylori
- & others

**200%**  
increase

Since May 2020, there has been a 200% increase in the # of pharmacies with CLIA/point of care waivers in the U.S., leading to more pharmacist accessibility for patient care services.<sup>5</sup>

# PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT



Approximately 50% of all adults in the U.S. have one or more chronic disease conditions <sup>6</sup>



Chronic conditions account for over 85% of total U.S. health care costs <sup>7</sup>



Saved for every \$1 spent on pharmacist service. <sup>8</sup>

## COVID-19

From February 2020 - November 2022, pharmacists in the U.S. provided more than



COVID-19 tests <sup>9</sup>



COVID-19 Vaccinations <sup>9</sup>

### Engaging Pharmacists & Their Teams

Expanding the number of pharmacies with test-and-treat sites in medically underserved areas could increase access to COVID-19 treatment



## INFLUENZA

Rhode Island pharmacists are providing flu shots

**TWICE**  
the hours offered for giving immunizations vs. provider's offices <sup>12</sup>

**2022 Flu Season**  
Pharmacies have given **18.7 Million** flu shots  
**vs**  
**10.7 Million** given at provider's offices <sup>11</sup>



States now authorize pharmacists to directly prescribe antivirals based on a positive flu test. <sup>13</sup>

Rhode Island pharmacists should be authorized to do this too!

## OPIOID CRISIS

**80,000 Americans** died from an opioid overdose in 2021. <sup>14</sup>

**221**  
average deaths per day <sup>15</sup>



States authorize pharmacists to administer naltrexone to patients. <sup>16</sup>

Naloxone access laws that grant pharmacists direct authority to prescribe are associated with significant reductions in fatal overdoses.

## HIV

Pharmacists have been identified by the CDC as key professionals in achieving one of the CDC's goals of ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. by preventing HIV infection.

States authorize pharmacists to directly prescribe PrEP. <sup>17</sup>



States authorize pharmacists to directly prescribe PEP. <sup>17</sup>



This information was developed through a collaboration between NASPA and APhA, with generous support from the Community Pharmacy Foundation.



Access our references at [tinyurl.com/2022factsheet](https://tinyurl.com/2022factsheet)  
Or scan this QR code