

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services

Representative Susan Donovan, Chair

Representative Joshua Giraldo, First Vice Chair

Representative Brandon Potter, Second Vice Chair

Rhode Island State House

82 Smith Street

Providence, RI 02903

February 23, 2024

**Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 7445: An Act Relating to Business and Professions
– Pharmacies**

Dear Chairperson Donovan and members of the House Health and Human Services:

My name is Toni Sullo and I am a final year Doctor of Pharmacy student at the University of Rhode Island. I am writing today to express my sincere **support for House Bill 7445: An Act Relating to Business and Professions – Pharmacies**, allowing pharmacists prescribing of tobacco cessation therapy which would be covered by all health insurance carriers.

I support Bill 7445 because it will **increase access to nicotine cessation therapy by providing a convenient and cost efficient means of receiving vital health care.**

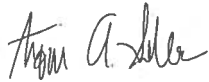
Currently, over-the-counter nicotine cessation products are available for purchase to persons at least 21 years old. Therefore, **there is a gap in therapy for young adults aged 18 through 21 who are otherwise eligible for treatment, but are unable to purchase said products.** It is important to **not overlook this age demographic**, as a large portion of young adults are affected by nicotine dependence, mostly by means of disposable e-cigarettes. And for those persons looking to improve their health, they unfortunately cannot purchase the over-the-counter medications FDA-approved for them. **Pharmacists prescribing tobacco cessation products can close this gap, as well as expand treatment possibilities to more than just nicotine replacement products.**

While over-the-counter nicotine cessation therapy such as nicotine gum, lozenges, and patches do not require a prescription for purchase, these options are not always the best fit for each individual. Gums and lozenges are intended to be used every 1 to 2 hours for the first 6 weeks of treatment, which for some patients, may not easily fit into their daily lives. Other options such as bupropion and varenicline have the added value of convenient dosing frequency, but require a prescription by a provider. This barrier can be discouraging to patients for a plethora of reasons, such as the difficulty in obtaining a timely appointment, the cost of appointment copays, and the lack of established care with a provider. Such barriers can easily be overcome by allowing pharmacists prescriptive authority of tobacco cessation products. Furthermore, **this will help encourage patients to maintain a primary care provider, while connecting those high-risk patients or patients with contraindications to a provider.**

Overall, Bill 7445 will not only improve the number of patients capable of using tobacco cessation therapies, but also promote adherence of treatment - improving the health and well-being of our community.

I urge you to vote in favor of Bill 7445.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Sullo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "S".

Toni Sullo

Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate, 2024

University of Rhode Island, College of Pharmacy