



RI Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 771
www.health.ri.gov

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Susan R. Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

H 5427 – Relating to Businesses and Professions - Pharmacies

Dear Chair Donovan:

Please accept this letter of support for H 5427, legislation that would include the COVID-19 immunization under the consent and reporting provisions required for pharmacist-administered immunizations to individuals between age 9 and 18. This act, which would take effect upon passage, was introduced at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH).

Currently, the federal *Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act* allows pharmacists to administer COVID-19 vaccine to anyone older than 3. While the *PREP Act* was extended to December 31, 2029, H 5427 would bring COVID-19 vaccine in line with influenza vaccine administration practices at pharmacies under Rhode Island law and will allow for continuity of care and maintain immunization access across Rhode Island when the *PREP Act* expires.

For the 2023-2024 season, 43.9% of COVID-19 vaccine administrations for anyone ages 9-18 occurred at a pharmacy. If the ability to vaccinate this age group were not available at pharmacies, fewer children in this age group would have been vaccinated against COVID-19. In addition, of all COVID-19 doses administered to Rhode Island children ages 9 to 18 during this period, 23.5% were administered at a pharmacy to Black, non-Hispanic children, and 28.8% were administered to Hispanic children at a pharmacy. Providing COVID-19 vaccines to this age group at a pharmacy would allow RIDOH to continue ensuring equitable access to health services for Rhode Island children.

Forty states currently allow pharmacists to administer COVID-19 vaccine to anyone younger than 18 under state authority. Connecticut and Vermont are the only other New England states that do not allow pharmacist to administer COVID-19 vaccine to children younger than 18. See: (<https://naspa.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Pharmacist-Immunization-Authority-April-2023.pdf>).

It is for these reasons that I encourage your favorable consideration of this important public

health legislation.

Sincerely,



Jerome M. Larkin, MD
Director

CC: The Honorable Michelle McGaw
The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy