

February 3, 2022

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chairwoman  
The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chairwoman  
Health & Government Operations Committee  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF HB229**

Dear Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk and committee members:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) in support of House Bill 229. This legislation alters the definition of “maintenance injectable medication” to include medications that are administered by injection and that treats sexually transmitted infections. These long-acting injectables (LAIs) when administered by pharmacist improve access to care and promotes better health outcomes.

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 395 independent community pharmacies in Maryland. These Maryland pharmacies filled over 22 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.

Over 90% of Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy<sup>1</sup> and more than any other segment of the pharmacy industry, independent community pharmacies are often located in underserved rural and urban areas. These pharmacies are frequently the most accessible healthcare providers in many communities and are vital in the provision of immunizations, testing and other services. LAIs have been important tools to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other mental health issues but there have been barriers to this care such as scheduling challenges, limited personnel and maintaining inventory of the medications. Community pharmacies are well positioned to alleviate those barriers with their expertise and accessibility.

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<sup>1</sup> NCPDP Pharmacy File, ArcGIS Census Tract File, NACDS Economics Department.

HB229 will increase patient access treatments for mental health and STI's and assist in reducing spending related to mental health and other chronic conditions. To protect improve access to quality and timely care, we respectfully ask you to support HB229.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me at [belawoe.akwakoku@ncpa.org](mailto:belawoe.akwakoku@ncpa.org) or (703) 600 – 1179.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Belawoe Akwakoku". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

Belawoe Akwakoku  
Manager, State Government Affairs  
National Community Pharmacy Association