

March 3, 2022

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chairwoman  
Health & Education Committee  
Senate Committee Room A/Pocohontas Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

**RE: NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1324**

Dear Chairwoman Lucas and committee members,

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) in support of **House Bill 1324**. This legislation directs the Virginia Board of Pharmacy to adopt regulations related to work environment requirements for pharmacy staff that protect health, safety and welfare of patients. Approval of this bill will promote a healthier workplace and more efficient operations within community pharmacies.

NCPA represents the interests of America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 328 independent community pharmacies in Virginia that employ over 3,000 full-time employees who filled over 18.8 million prescriptions last year. Our members are small business owners who are among America's most accessible health care providers in many communities.

Increased workload and reports of burnout, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, have been associated with medication and dispensing errors. Regulators auditing pharmacies in Oklahoma found understaffed facilities, employees working around unopened delivery boxes and discovered that a specific pharmacy was up to two weeks behind on filling prescriptions because of inadequate staffing.<sup>1</sup> The state's Board of Pharmacy recommended increased training for technicians and removing some required metrics along with other tasks that could over burden the staff. Missouri's Board of Pharmacy is forming a taskforce on workplace conditions, including staffing, prescription volumes, this being a response to reports of pharmacists and staff feeling pressured to meet metrics and not having adequate time to complete tasks.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past two years, pharmacists in Virginia and across the country have had to respond to a greater workload and have risen to the occasion by delivering quality services that may not have been accessed by the public due to capacity limits and spacing restrictions. As the demand has increased for pharmacy services and care, it is imperative that pharmacy staff are protected so they can deliver the highest quality of care possible. As this pandemic persists and demand of pharmacy services

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen Gabler *CVS Fined for Prescription Errors and Poor Staffing at Pharmacies* New York Times, July 16, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/business/cvs-pharmacies-oklahoma.html>

<sup>2</sup> Annika Merrilees *Missouri board to investigate working conditions at pharmacies after hundreds complain* St. Louis Post-Dispatch, July 3, 2020, available at [https://www.stltoday.com/business/local/missouri-board-to-investigate-working-conditions-at-pharmacies-after-hundreds-complain/article\\_7a872c83-93a6-58d3-bd26-097ffefdbfa5.html](https://www.stltoday.com/business/local/missouri-board-to-investigate-working-conditions-at-pharmacies-after-hundreds-complain/article_7a872c83-93a6-58d3-bd26-097ffefdbfa5.html)

continue it is critical that safeguards are put in place assist pharmacists and pharmacies to practice and operate to the best of their ability.

NCPA appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony supportive of this legislation that will improve workplace safety and promote quality patient care. This bill promotes accountability within the practice of pharmacy and better protects patients when providing care and other services. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [belawoe.akwakoku@ncpa.org](mailto:belawoe.akwakoku@ncpa.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Belawoe Akwakoku".

Belawoe Akwakoku  
State Government Affairs Manager  
National Community Pharmacists Association