

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Joshua Miller  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Room 211  
Providence, RI 02903

### **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS FOR SENATE BILL 2329**

Dear Chair Miller and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 2329, a bill that authorizes pharmacists to prescribe and dispense tobacco cessation therapy medications. While we support the bill, we also support certain amendments to ensure alignment with a companion bill, House Bill 7874, and to provide reimbursement of these services through the state's Medicaid program and by commercial insurers.

The decision to quit using tobacco products is often a spontaneous one, which means that increased access to care in settings close to and convenient for patients is key. Ninety percent of Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy, and pharmacies are often open nights and weekends, when other care settings are closed. Pharmacists are frequently referred to as the most accessible healthcare professional, as many patients can ask for advice and counseling regarding their health and medications without the requirement of an appointment. Pharmacists are the healthcare system's medication experts, and are highly qualified to analyze and optimize medication regimens to lower costs and improve health. More importantly, pharmacists have demonstrated the ability to achieve quit rates similar to or higher than other healthcare professionals.<sup>1</sup> Fourteen other states have recognized pharmacists' ability to impact this public health issue and have authorized pharmacist prescribing of tobacco cessation aids.<sup>2</sup>

We encourage the committee to support an amendment to change the wording in line 5 of the bill to read "FDA-approved tobacco cessation drug therapies" rather than the current wording, "first line tobacco cessation drug therapies." While first line therapies should be used when possible, in order to provide true increased access to these therapies for patients and improve public health, pharmacists need to be able to take individual patient factors into consideration to select the most clinically appropriate, guideline-driven option. This change would also align S 2329 with the House companion version, H 7874.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.japha.org/article/S1544-3191\(18\)30001-3/fulltext#relatedArticles](https://www.japha.org/article/S1544-3191(18)30001-3/fulltext#relatedArticles)

<sup>2</sup> <https://naspa.us/resource/tobacco-cessation/>

We also encourage the committee to consider adding language ensuring coverage of these services by Medicaid and commercial insurers to establish practice models that incentivize pharmacist participation in these providing these services that increase patient access to care. Similar language has been included in S 2330, which is also up for consideration by this committee. In order to provide these services, it is vital there be a sustainable business model for pharmacists patient care services, which is aligned with the business model for services provided by other healthcare professionals.

Finally, we encourage the committee to amend S 2329 to remove the training program requirement, as pharmacists receive this training as a part of their initial education. Alternatively, the committee could replace the training program requirement with the following language: “have training and education sufficient to perform the duties involved and maintain appropriate professional competencies.” Pharmacists, like other healthcare providers, are held to a professional standard of care, which includes ensuring they are appropriately trained and educated before providing any service to a patient.

NCPA, NASPA, and APhA strongly support the Rhode Island Pharmacists Association in their advocacy for S 2329, which will authorize pharmacists to prescribe and dispense tobacco cessation therapies and appreciate the bill’s sponsor, Senator Valverde, for their attention to this important public health issue. We urge the committee to support the bill with certain amendments to guarantee better access to these services for Rhode Islanders who need them.

Sincerely,

National Community Pharmacy Association  
National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations  
American Pharmacists Association