

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chairwoman  
The Honorable Katherine Klausmeier, Vice-Chairwoman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 2 West Wing  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 678 – REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED BY A PHARMACIST**

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Finance Committee,

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **SENATE BILL 678**, a bill that increases patient access to their pharmacist by allowing them to receive reimbursement for the services they provide. We **support** this bill as it will ensure patients have more time with their most accessible health care professional and better aligns the role of the pharmacist with their extensive education and training.

NCPA represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 332 independent pharmacies in Maryland. These Maryland pharmacies filled over 20 million prescriptions last year, impacting the lives of thousands of patients in your state. 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.

Within the next 10 years, the U.S. could see a shortage of over 55,000 primary care physicians.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland there are 47 areas that are designated as health professional shortage areas.<sup>3</sup> There are thousands of pharmacists in Maryland who are ready to provide valuable healthcare services to these communities that have limited access to care.<sup>4</sup> By realigning financial incentives and reimbursing pharmacists for their services similar to other health care professionals there will be greater access to the vital health care services pharmacists provide.

---

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

<sup>2</sup> Association of American Medical Colleges. 2019 UPDATE The Complexities of Physician Supply And Demand Projections From 2017 To 2032. Available at: [https://aamcblack.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer\\_public/31/13/3113ee5c-a038-4c16-89af-294a69826650/2019\\_update\\_-\\_the\\_complexities\\_of\\_physician\\_supply\\_and\\_demand\\_-\\_projections\\_from\\_2017-2032.pdf](https://aamcblack.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/31/13/3113ee5c-a038-4c16-89af-294a69826650/2019_update_-_the_complexities_of_physician_supply_and_demand_-_projections_from_2017-2032.pdf)

Kaiser Family Foundation. Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Timeframe: as of September 30, 2019. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/stateindicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areashpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Employment Statistics Query System. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/home>.

To the benefit of this realignment substantial published literature documents the significant improvement to patient outcomes<sup>5</sup> and reduction in health care expenditures<sup>6</sup> when pharmacists are more optimally leveraged. Compilation of studies have found themes in these cost savings, including “decreased total health expenditures, decreased unnecessary care (e.g., fewer hospitalizations, emergency department [ED] visits, and physician visits), and decreased societal costs (e.g., missed or nonproductive workdays).”<sup>6</sup> The adoption of Senate Bill 678 would result in Maryland joining other states, such as, Ohio, Colorado, California, and Wisconsin as national leaders in empowering the pharmacist to better provide valuable services to their communities. In states where such legislation has already been implemented, we are observing health plans, notably Medicaid Managed Care Organizations recognizing the value of the pharmacist and investing in the services they provide.

As you may be aware, many of our community pharmacies, especially those in rural communities<sup>7</sup>, are closing because of the current unsustainable reimbursement model in the drug supply chain. This often hits Mom-and-Pop independent pharmacies the hardest and can cause the elimination of a needed healthcare professional and cornerstone of our communities. The reimbursement of services provided by pharmacists opens up additional revenue opportunities for these pharmacists to maintain their practice and the provision of valuable services to our communities.

Senate Bill 678 will ensure more patients have greater access to health care services provided by pharmacists while supporting the sustainability of local pharmacies in our communities. The adoption of this important legislation will ensure that citizens across the state of Maryland are able to receive vital health care services provided by their pharmacist.

NCPA strongly supports the Maryland Pharmacists Association in their advocacy for this bill. We appreciate the bill’s sponsor, Senator Beidle, for her attention to this important issue and urge approval from this committee.

Sincerely,



Belawoe Akwakoku  
Manager, State Government Affairs Manager  
National Community Pharmacists Association

---

<sup>5</sup> Giberson S, Yoder S, Lee MP. Improving Patient and Health System Outcomes through Advanced Pharmacy Practice. A Report to the U.S. Surgeon General. Office of the Chief Pharmacist. U.S. Public Health Service. Dec 2011. Available at:

[https://www.accp.com/docs/positions/misc/improving\\_patient\\_and\\_health\\_system\\_outcomes.pdf](https://www.accp.com/docs/positions/misc/improving_patient_and_health_system_outcomes.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Murphy EM, Rodis, JR, Mann HJ. Three ways to advocate for the economic value of the pharmacist in health care. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association. August 2020. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544319120303927>

<sup>7</sup> Hawryluk M. Large parts of rural America are becoming drugstore deserts. These small towns found an escape. *The Washington Post*. Published December 15, 2021. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/12/03/drugstore-deserts-rural-america/>