

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Room 101
Providence, RI 02903

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS FOR HOUSE BILL 7874

Dear Chair Casey and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 7874, 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 to companion bill, S 2329, 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.¹ Fourteen other states have recognized pharmacists' ability to impact this public health issue and have authorized pharmacist prescribing of tobacco cessation aids.²

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 up for consideration by the Senate 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.

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

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

Finally, we encourage the committee to amend H 7874 to remove the training program requirement, as pharmacists receive this training as a part of their initial education, or to 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 H 7874, which will authorize pharmacists to prescribe and dispense tobacco cessation therapies and appreciate the bill’s sponsor, Representative Tanzi, 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