

July 20, 2017

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2123 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2123 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Burgess and Ranking Member Green:

As members of the Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition, we write today to thank the Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health for considering improvements to strengthen and sustain the Medicare program. When announcing the Subcommittee's hearing "Examining Bipartisan Legislation to Improve the Medicare Program," Chairman Burgess stated that the Medicare program can "benefit from targeted reforms to improve the care it delivers to vulnerable patients, streamline the ability of providers to deliver that care, and ensure its long-term viability." We strongly believe that H.R. 592, the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act, is a bipartisan proposal that achieves all three of these goals and we encourage the Subcommittee to consider this legislation.

Introduced by Subcommittee Vice Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Representatives G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), Tom Reed (R-NY), and Ron Kind (D-WI), the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act already has over 203 bipartisan cosponsors this Congress (and an identical bill in the 114th Congress garnered 296 cosponsors). The bill earns such widespread support because it directly addresses the health care access challenge facing many of our nation's seniors.

H.R. 592 will enable Medicare patients in medically underserved communities to better access health care through state-licensed pharmacists practicing according to their own state's scope of practice. Rather than relying on physicians for services such as chronic disease management, health and wellness testing, and immunizations, patients in medically underserved areas would be able to receive their care from their local pharmacists, and at only 85 percent of the cost of physician fee schedule. In medically underserved areas like rural communities and inner-cities, pharmacists are often the closest health care professional, with nearly 91 percent of the population living within 5 miles of a pharmacy. Helping patients receive the care they need when they need it is a common-sense solution that will improve outcomes and reduce overall costs.

The importance of medication-related services cannot be overstated, especially in the Medicare program. Medications are the primary method of treating chronic disease and are involved in 80 percent of all treatment regimens. Moreover, the United States spends nearly \$300 billion annually on medication-related problems, including nonadherence. Pharmacists are the medication experts, and it is time for Medicare to recognize the role that these health care professionals play on a patient's care team.

The fact is that pharmacists are trained to do far more than to simply put pills in a bottle. Today's pharmacists receive clinically-based doctor of pharmacy degrees, and many also complete post-graduate

residencies and become Board-certified in a variety of specialties. As the demand for health care services continues to grow, pharmacists have expanded their role by collaborating with physicians, nurses, and other health care providers to meet patients' needs. Integrating pharmacists into the Medicare Part B program like other health care professionals such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants will benefit patients, create a new access point in a system already facing a growing physician shortage, and reduce costs for Medicare.

We look forward to working with the Subcommittee as you continue to examine changes to the Medicare program and we encourage passage of H.R. 592. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Vince Ventimiglia at (202)774-1408. We welcome ongoing opportunities to work with the Subcommittee on moving the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

American Pharmacists Association
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Community Pharmacists Association
Walgreen Co.

CC:

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
The Honorable Tim Murphy
The Honorable Gregg Harper
The Honorable Pete Olson
The Honorable Morgan Griffith
The Honorable Bill Johnson
The Honorable Larry Bucshon
The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
The Honorable Chris Collins
The Honorable Tim Walberg
The Honorable Bobby Rush
The Honorable Eliot Engel
The Honorable Janice Schakowsky
The Honorable Peter Welch
The Honorable Paul Tonko
The Honorable Joseph Kennedy
The Honorable Raul Ruiz
The Honorable Debbie Dingell

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
The Honorable John Shimkus
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers
The Honorable Leonard Lance
The Honorable Adam Kinzinger
The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
The Honorable Billy Long
The Honorable Susan Brooks
The Honorable Richard Hudson
The Honorable Kevin Cramer
The Honorable Buddy Carter
The Honorable Anna Eshoo
The Honorable Diana DeGette
The Honorable Jerry McNerney
The Honorable Ben Lujan
The Honorable David Loebsack
The Honorable Tony Cardenas
The Honorable Scott Peters