

Ashley Griffin
Hamden, CT
HB 5406
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My name is Ashley Griffin. I wrote this to testify in support of HB 5406, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING PHARMACY AND PHARMACIST PRESCRIPTION ERRORS. I am a friend of Diana and Stephen Henderson. When I heard of the pharmacy errors which they had experienced with two separate prescriptions for their daughter I was not surprised. I have been learning over time that apparently there are not high standards or regulations in Connecticut to prevent and also hold accountable pharmacists who make errors.

In fact, just recently in my own field (veterinary medicine) a colleague of mine in Connecticut (who practices excellent medicine) called in a prescription for one of her patients, a very cute little dog. My understanding is that my colleague documented exactly what prescription the patient needed in her records and also repeated it on the phone to the pharmacist with two employees as witnesses. However, the pharmacist evidently did not write the dosage information correctly on the prescription label. This resulted in the dog being over-dosed. Because of this the little dog became very ill and was hospitalized. Multiple attempts were made to save her from the over dosage. Unfortunately, she could not recover from the over dosage and in the end had to be euthanized. It was horrible and very sad for the veterinarian and also the poor clients, who inadvertently had over dosed their dog by following the directions written by the pharmacist. However, even worse was that apparently the pharmacist had no remorse and even attempted to point a finger instead at the veterinarian, who had done nothing wrong. In addition, the practice found later that apparently there are no laws in Connecticut to hold pharmacists accountable for their errors. This was very disturbing.

I am concerned about the casual lack of standards being in place to hold pharmacists in Connecticut accountable as well as to prevent them from repeating errors already made. Pharmacists have a responsibility to make certain they are filling prescriptions properly. They are paid very well for their work and with that kind of premium should hold at the forefront that they will pay full attention to details. In my opinion, if they are not then perhaps they should not be in the pharmacy profession.

The public gives their trust (and in some cases their health or life) to pharmacists and depends on them to simply fill a prescription PROPERLY. It makes excellent sense for a pharmacist to double or even triple check everything on a label BEFORE it is purchased for each patient. This practice protects innocent patients from harm and also protects the pharmacist from his or her own mistakes.

In addition to having better checks and balances in the system I also believe that mandating pharmacy personnel to report all errors will solidify safety for patients and motivate pharmacists to stay alert to details. Moreover, I feel errors that escape a better system should be made available for the public to enable innocent people to make informed choices. I believe the public is forgiving and understanding (to a reasonable degree) when mistakes occur. People know that no one in this world is perfect. It will not ruin a pharmacist's career to accept responsibility for his/her errors at work (unless it was a very severe error). If anything, the public will more likely feel that a pharmacist with a reported error is probably now a better pharmacist because they learned from and acknowledged their mistake(s). A bigger problem would be that when there are no consequences human nature is to not pay the needed attention to prevent reoccurrences of the same or further errors. This is unacceptable.

Ashley Griffin
Hamden, CT

When a prescription is filled it is not supposed to be like playing Russian roulette. Consumers should be aware of their pharmacist's track record. This issue is not supposed to be about the pharmacists and their concern of being exposed. It's supposed to be about their own customers (the people they are supposed to be serving) being kept safe from pharmacy errors which can harm or even kill innocent patients.

I was informed that a lobbyist actually recently stated that if pharmacists' errors were exposed this would cause the pharmacists to be 'embarrassed' and then this may 'scare' them enough to cause them to try to 'cover up' their mistakes. My response to this is that if pharmacists who made errors were allowed to be exposed they SHOULD be embarrassed and hopefully scared enough from repeating errors again. Anyone knows that consequences make people think twice. Again, that's human nature. In fact, even other pharmacists who haven't made an error will also be more conscientious about their actions at work as potentially having very severe and negative effects on innocent people (if reporting is mandated and errors are made public).

Furthermore, if a pharmacist purposefully tries to hide his/her errors then they should have double trouble and perhaps have their license suspended or revoked (in addition to being exposed to the public). There has to be some sanction imposed for such selfish, unconscionable behavior of trying to hide facts like these from the innocent individuals whom pharmacists are supposed to be serving. Cover ups in medical issues are simply unethical. In fact, that's exactly the type of pharmacist I would want to avoid.

Essentially, if reporting pharmacy errors is not mandated and these errors are not made public then there is no incentive for pharmacists to be more careful. I believe the public is fair and also forgiving to a degree. Either way the public should have the **right to know** the history of who is filling their prescriptions because there is potential for severe negative impact. It is insult to injury and belittles the harm that has been done to not have any consequences at all.