

Dear Representatives,

Let me start with a quick introduction. I am a pharmacist and UConn grad living in Cheshire, CT. I am on the Board of Directors of the CT Pharmacists Association and I work at both the Hospital of St. Raphael in New Haven and Target Pharmacy in Waterbury. In both of my work settings, I serve a great deal of Medicaid patients. It is a privilege to help treat, educate and protect this population of our state, who is often in the greatest need of the services pharmacists can provide. However, with the bill concerning prescription drug purchasing proposed, I am greatly concerned about the future access these patients will have to these services.

I am writing you regarding the bill that you will be reviewing on Monday 2/14/11 regarding drug purchasing for prescription drugs for patients with Medicaid, SAGA, ConnPACE and CT AIDS drug assistance programs. The language of the bill that concerns me greatly is:

"the state shall reimburse for all legend drugs provided under the Medicaid, SAGA, ConnPACE and Connecticut AIDS drug assistance programs at a rate equal to the actual cost of procurement by the Comptroller plus a professional fee of \$2.90." This language does not define what that actual cost is.

If pharmacists are reimbursed the actual cost of the drug plus a small \$2.90 fee, pharmacies will be no doubt losing a significant amount of money in filling state assistance prescriptions. I went to UConn for 6 years to be a pharmacist, for which I am very proud. I am still paying for that education. I am a pharmacist because I am able to help people but it is also my living.

Pharmacies have an incredible amount of capital; the cost to order a stock bottle of medication far exceeds the actual cost of the drug plus \$2.90.

Medications are perishables and if we are not reimbursed more than the actual cost of a few prescriptions from that bottle the business will lose significant dollars. A fee of \$2.90 does not account for the time spent in preparing the medication for their patient. Pharmacists do not just count pills and label a bottle.

They ensure medications are used appropriately and safely, controlled substances are handled according to state law, and patients understand their medication. Why did I pay tuition at UConn for a Doctor of Pharmacy degree to now be expected to give services away for free?

There is no other health care professional expected to make this financial sacrifice.

I understand that the state has a budget and money has to be recovered from somewhere but **RETAIL PHARMACIES ARE NOT NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS!**

They do not receive tax breaks or donations. Many pharmacies are small CT businesses that will **NOT SURVIVE** if this legislation passes. Pharmacists personally pay taxes already to fund these medication assistance services, so it is unfair and dangerous for our health care providers to be getting taxed again.

As more and more pharmacies become financially unable to provide services to their patients on assistance, they will have to refuse these prescriptions and lose a large portion of their business and will be forced to close. This will reduce the access your constituents and my patients have to services.

This bill is bad for CT professionals, CT patients and CT small and chain businesses. Please do not let this bill last another day.

I thank you for your time and consideration and would appreciate any response you can provide.

Sincerely yours,
Gillian Burns-Kuszewski, PharmD