



Testimony on Behalf of the New England Biotechnology Association (NEBA)

In Support of SB371, An Act Concerning the Administration of Injectable Vaccines to Adults in Pharmacies

March 16, 2012

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Joint Committee on Public Health:

NEBA advocates on behalf of biomedical research and counts among our members many leading New England biotechnology companies and biomedical research institutions. Our overarching goal is to grow the biotech sector, create well paying and meaningful jobs and, of course, speed the progress towards new medical treatments and cures.

We are in support of SB 371 which we feel will increase adult vaccination rates in Connecticut. Despite the need and ability to protect adults from vaccine-preventable infectious diseases, vaccination rates among adults remain low. The good infrastructure for vaccinating children and awareness of the benefits of childhood vaccinations have boosted vaccination rates among children and lowered death rates from vaccine-preventable diseases. Achieving higher vaccination rates among adults offers a significant opportunity to reduce the human and financial costs of diseases that could be prevented by vaccines. We support public policies that improve access to and awareness of recommended vaccinations for adults. Although we have many supports to help ensure U.S. children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases, 40,000 to 50,000 U.S. adults still die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases. In addition to causing thousands of deaths, these diseases cause \$10 billion in medical care costs.¹

We believe one tool is increasing the number of vaccination sites. Increasing the number of places people can receive vaccinations, including using pharmacists as vaccinators, could help ensure that affordable and efficient access to age-appropriate immunization is a universal preventive health care benefit, with significant economic and social returns for public health overall.

The use of pharmacists to administer vaccines is a logical and efficient approach to increasing vaccine delivery to adults. Pharmacists are easily accessible, knowledgeable sources about vaccines information, and possess sufficient training and capability to administer vaccines safely.

- Americans consistently name pharmacists the most trusted professional on the annual Gallup Polls survey.
- Research shows that states that allow pharmacists to provide immunizations have significantly higher rates of vaccination in all age group for influenza.ⁱⁱ
- In the overwhelming majority of states, pharmacists can immunize adults with all or most vaccinations recommended by the national Advisory Council on Immunization Practices (ACIP).
- There are more than 56,000 pharmacies in the United States: more than 39,000 pharmacies operated by traditional chain pharmacy companies, supermarkets, and mass merchants, and nearly 17,000 independent pharmacies.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Approximately 250 million people walk into a pharmacy every week, usually with no prior appointment.^{iv} Community pharmacists are available to the public for long hours, virtually every day.^v

Other medical professionals support pharmacists' administering vaccines.

- The American College of Physicians and the American Society of Internal Medicine support the use of the pharmacist as a vaccine information source, host of immunization sites, and immunizer, as appropriate and allowed by state law. Increased access to immunization by trained pharmacy professionals will help to increase adult immunization.^{vi}
- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supports the role of pharmacists in immunization, positioning the profession as a vital, effective partner in this critical area of public health.^{vii}
- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) supports the use of pharmacists as immunizers, allowing them to bill for the administration of immunizations.^{viii}

Pharmacists can be an essential part of immunization delivery. Services provided outside of the traditional "medical home" can be tracked and reimbursed through the introduction of e-prescribing, electronic medical records, and insurance billing.

- The Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 established uniform standards for transmitting prescription information electronically ("e-prescribing") for Medicare. E-prescribing may provide pharmacists, physicians, and other members of a patient's health care team access to patient medical records, a patient's medication use

history, possible interactions among medicines, Medicare drug coverage, and information about lower-cost, therapeutically appropriate alternatives.^{ix}

- E-prescribing helps providers adjust to using electronic records and puts a framework in place for broader use of electronic records.
- The federal stimulus package of 2010 included \$19 billion for supporting broader use of health information technology including electronic medical records.

In conclusion, we believe that allowing pharmacists to vaccinate for all ACIP recommended vaccines for adults will ensure that the citizens of this state have access to these important cornerstones of prevention.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this matter.

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ⁱ "Adult Immunization: Shots to Save Lives". Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Trust for America's Health and Infectious Disease Society of America. February 2010.

ⁱⁱ Steyer et al. "The Role of Pharmacists in the Delivery of Influenza Vaccinations" *Vaccine*. 2004; Hogue, Micheal, Grabenstein, John, Foster Stephan, Rothholz, Mitchel (2006). *Pharmacist Involvement with Immunizations: A Decade of Professional Advancement*.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Associate of Chain Drug Stores. <http://www.nacds.org/user-assets/pdfs/2010/newsrelease/LtrSebeliusNI/VW.pdf>. Last accessed March 2011.

^{iv} The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there were 269,900 pharmacists in 2008. http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm. Last accessed 2010.

^v Madhavan, Suresh, Sindney Rosenbluth, Mayur Amonkar. *Pharmacists and Immunizations: A national survey*. *J Am Pharm Assoc (Wash)*. 2001 Jan-Feb;41(1):32-45.

^{vi} "Pharmacist Scope of Practice" *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2002; 136: 79-85.

^{vii} Letter from CDC to the American Pharmacist Association. October 2010.

^{viii} "2010-2011 Immunizers Question and Answer Guide," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. <https://www.cms.gov/immunizations/>. Last accessed March 2012.

^{ix} Pharmacist.com. Issues. E-Prescribing Standards/Health IT. <http://www.pharmacist.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Issues&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=35&ContentID=12357>. Last accessed November 2011.