

Public Health Committee Testimony – March 16, 2012

SB 371: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF INJECTABLE VACCINES TO ADULTS IN PHARMACIES

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee my name is Thomas Buckley, I am an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pharmacy Practice at the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, and I write in strong support of SB 371: An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines By Licensed Pharmacists.

This bill will amend current authorization of pharmacist administration of influenza, pneumococcal and herpes zoster vaccine to include all adult vaccines. In my faculty role at UCONN, I am part of the faculty that provides the immunization certification course for both students and licensed pharmacists. This 20-hour certification course is a requirement for all pharmacists that wish to administer immunizations, and includes an exhaustive study of all vaccines, administration techniques, safety and reporting requirements. Since the original authorization of pharmacists administering immunizations, I have certified well over a thousand pharmacists and student pharmacist interns in Connecticut.

Since the initial legislation authorizing pharmacists to provide influenza vaccine resulted in such a significant increase in vaccination rates in Connecticut, the Connecticut Department of Public Health approached the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy with a grant opportunity to assist pharmacists in increasing pneumococcal and herpes zoster vaccination rates in our state. I am the principle investigator of this research grant, and we are currently in the process of assessing immunization practices in our state. Interventions will support pharmacists to improve rates of pneumococcal and herpes zoster immunization, with a specific focus on reducing the wide disparities in immunizations in our Hispanic and African American communities.

As we've seen with the highly successful influenza vaccine programs of the past few years, pharmacists are in an excellent position to be public health advocates for immunization, a fact recognized and appreciated by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. In addition to their high public trust and accessibility, pharmacists can identify the need for specific vaccines through review of disease and medication histories. Recent studies have shown that up to 94% of patients responded to pharmacists' recommendations to be vaccinated.

Vaccination is considered to be one of the most cost-effective health interventions we have available. Given the large vaccination gap in adults, the extensive pharmacist training certification required, and the high public acceptance of pharmacist vaccine education and administration, I strongly urge the committee to pass this immunization bill that would include all adult vaccines to improve the public health of our citizens.

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