



**Testimony of Ben Davis, PharmD.**

**In Support of HB 5129**

**Tuesday, February 16, 2016**

**Before the Public Health Committee**

Good morning Representative Ritter and Senator Gerratana and members of the committee. My name is Ben Davis and I am a pharmacist at Walgreens. I am here to request your support for **HB 5129 An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines by Pharmacists and Medical Assistants and the Listing of Certified Medical Assistants.**

HB 5129 would expand pharmacists' immunization capabilities for the influenza vaccine to patients **twelve years and older**. Currently, Connecticut pharmacists can only administer immunizations to anyone 18 years of age and older and this has limited patient access. HB 5129 will remove the 18 year age restriction, therefore improving access to affordable, safe, and preventable health care for the patients of our State.

Currently, every state allows pharmacists to administer vaccinations. Pharmacists are safely providing immunizations to children and adolescents seven years of age and older in 24 states and 36 states allow trained pharmacy interns to administer immunizations. Pennsylvania recently expanded their law to allow pharmacists to immunize children 9 years and older. Last year Walgreens pharmacists vaccinated over 88,000 individuals. The unique access pharmacies offer to the public, including extended hours of operation and weekend availability, coupled with being a trusted health care professional, places pharmacies in an ideal position to have a major impact on reducing vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Furthermore, numerous physicians have stressed that they believe collaboration between physicians and pharmacists is key to increasing vaccination rates in Connecticut. Using pharmacists as immunizers is a convenient and easy way to boost rates especially for the flu vaccine. According to the CDC, 139 children in the United States that were old enough to receive a vaccination died from the flu this past season; 90% of those children were not vaccinated.

Pharmacists receive extensive training to administer immunizations. The curriculum is nationally recognized and involves the complete study of vaccines, their use, proper administration, patient screening, and emergency response. It is as rigorous as other healthcare professionals. Pharmacists are trusted and trained professionals in the community. In fact, a November 2012 Gallup poll found pharmacists rank at the top of the list in terms of honesty and ethical standards of any profession.

Connecticut's restrictive law currently prevents our military families from taking full advantage of their TRICARE immunization benefit for their children. Since 2011, the U. S. Defense Department began covering the cost of all vaccines administered by pharmacists, *without any co-payment*, for military personnel and their children through the Tricare insurance program. In the first six months after TRICARE began covering pharmacist-administered vaccines, 13,361 vaccines were administered under the pharmacy benefits program at a cost of \$289,513.19. Had those vaccines been administered under the medical benefit, the cost to TRICARE would have been \$1.8M. (76 Federal Register 41064, Department of Defense Final Rule Summary)

Last year the centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a letter stating "pharmacists and community vaccinators are uniquely positioned to promote and provide vaccines. In addition, their extensive reach into diverse communities allows greater access to vaccines for those who may not have a medical home and who have traditionally had lower rates of vaccine use." We could not agree more, please vote in favor of HB 5129.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.