



**Testimony Before the Public Health Committee
In Support of HB 5129 An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines by
Pharmacists and Medical Assistants and the Listing of Certified Medical Assistants
Carrie Rand-Anastasiades
February 16, 2016**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Carrie Rand-Anastasiades and I am the Executive Director of the CT Association of Community Pharmacies. We are an Association representing large pharmacies such as Walgreens, Rite-Aid, Stop & Shop and Big Y to name a few.

HB 5129 would increase access to life-saving vaccinations by allowing pharmacists to administer CDC-recommended influenza vaccinations to school-aged children 12 and older. **Pharmacists have been safely providing immunizations to adults in the state for many years and are currently safely administering them to children less than 18 years of age in 36 states. In fact, pharmacists administered more than 306,498 immunizations in Connecticut in 2014.**¹

Very simply, this legislation offers parents another *option* – one that is both very convenient and safe -- for flu vaccine access for their children, to complement the efforts of the state's physicians. With thousands of pharmacists already trained and licensed to administer immunizations working in the state, community pharmacies are ready and willing to be part of the solution to drive up vaccination rates.

Pharmacies are uniquely positioned to raise flu immunization rates among children. We offer busy working families a convenient option. Many of our pharmacies are open 24 hours, in the evenings, before school and on weekends. We are also particularly important source of healthcare services in rural areas of the state. Influenza is the only vaccine that everyone six months and older is recommended to get each year, therefore parents need every opportunity to get their children vaccinated, and it must fit into their busy lives.

¹ Source Healthcare Analytics PHAST® Prescription Monthly, data drawn 3/6/2015

Action by the US Department of Defense lends evidence to the value and quality of community pharmacy immunizations. In 2009, TRICARE, the health insurance program for military personnel and their beneficiaries, began covering flu immunizations given by a pharmacist -- without copay-- for both adults and children. The policy was such a success in raising immunization rates and saving costs, that two years later they published a final rule extending it to cover all CDC-recommended vaccines. The text of final rule states, *"the value of vaccines lies in the prevention of disease and reduced healthcare costs in the long term. Vaccines . . . save billions of dollars in health care costs annually. When vaccines are more readily accessible, a broader section of the population will receive them. In the last 5 years registered pharmacists have played an increasing role in providing clinical services through the retail pharmacy venue."*²

In short, pharmacists are ready, willing and able to safely increase access to life-saving flu immunizations for the children of Connecticut. We ask that you please allow Connecticut parents that option, available in many other states, by voting in favor of HB 5129.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

² 76 Federal Register 41064, Department of Defense, Final Rule Summary

Other Support for Expanding Pharmacists Ability to Immunize:

From UPMC Department of Medicine, Gary Fischer, MD, Vice Chair, Quality and Patient Safety; May 23, 2013 letter:

“Doctors are important immunizers, but they cannot do it alone. According to HAP, there are statewide physician shortages in several fields, including family practice, emergency medicine and pediatrics that may grow worse in the next few years. That is why it makes sense to call upon an army of more than 6600 certified pharmacist immunizers to do more. These pharmacists are already vaccinating adults against seasonal flu and other illnesses, and doing it safely . . . When pharmacists are allowed to immunize, vaccination rates go up. It makes sense to extend this common-sense policy to school-age children and teens.”

From an Institute of Medicine study on how to improve low vaccination rates among adolescents by expanding access beyond the traditional medical home published in Pediatrics: The Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2008:

“Health care settings beyond the traditional medical home have an important role to play in the provision of vaccines to adolescents . . . these health care settings can serve a pivotal and complementary role in ensuring that adolescents receive recommended vaccinations.”

“ . . . pharmacists’ competencies include vaccine education and mobilization, vaccine distribution, vaccine access and administration.”

“The number and distribution of pharmacies . . . make them a unique resource. Pharmacies are readily accessible to and frequently visited by adolescents. Many of them have extended hours on the evenings and weekends, and they are a particularly important source of health care in rural communities.”

“Pharmacists commitment to providing vaccine services was demonstrated in recent surveys of pharmacists who had completed vaccination training. Respondents reported that they had done so because of their commitment to improving the health of the public rather than for business or financial reasons or for continuing education credit.”

Demonstrated cost savings in the Department of Defense TRICARE program:

-In August of 2011, the Department of Defense’s final rule became effective allowing community pharmacies to administer all CDC-recommended vaccinations to its beneficiaries and their children through the TRICARE program. The TRICARE program is the health care program serving uniformed service members, retirees and their families.

-“The value of vaccines lies in the prevention of disease and reduced healthcare costs in the long term. Vaccines are highly effective in preventing death and disability, and save billions of dollars in health costs annually. When vaccines are made more readily accessible, a broader section of the population will receive them. In the last 5 years, registered pharmacists have played an increasing role in providing clinical services through the retail pharmacy venue.” (76 Federal Register 41063, Department of Defense Final Rule Summary)

-“For the first six months following publication of the interim final rule, 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)

In a June 2012 letter open letter to Pharmacists the US Assistant Surgeon General Anne Schuchat, MD, with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control wrote:

“Thank you all for your tremendous efforts this past year to raise immunization rates in the United States. Outbreaks of pertussis (whooping cough), influenza and measles, and continued low vaccination rates . . . are critical reminders of the ongoing efforts that are needed.”

“Pharmacists and community vaccinators are uniquely positioned to promote and provide vaccines to people in a wide range of communities. Their extensive reach into diverse communities allows greater access to vaccines . . .”

“The CDC and HHS ask for your continued support and efforts to help address vaccination needs in your communities . . . [by] ensuring that people who visit your pharmacies are aware of which vaccinations they needs by assessing their vaccines needs and offering those vaccines . . . [and]

partner[ing] with state and local health departments, immunization coalitions, medical providers, and others . . . to increase collaboration and outreach to those who need vaccines.”