



- **MAILING ADDRESS**
P.O. Box 3165
Harrisburg, PA 17105
 - **GENERAL OFFICE**
30 Hunter Lane
Camp Hill, PA 17011
 - **Telephone (717) 761-26335**
-

Testimony of Heather Larch, RPh

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

In Support of HB 5129 An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines By Pharmacists and Medical Assistants and the Listing of Certified Medical Assistants

Good morning, my name is Heather Larch, Manager of Clinical Services for Rite Aid in Connecticut. I am directly involved in our Immunization Program, as well as our Medication Therapy Management and other Clinical Services that we offer in our pharmacies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Representative Ritter and Senator Geratanna for introducing this bill and giving us the chance to convey our support to the Committee.

I am here to advocate for the passage of HB 5129. Current law allows pharmacists to provide vaccinations to adults. Pharmacists have been doing so, safely, for many years. In fact, approximately 306,498 immunizations were administered in by pharmacists in 2014. This bill is modeled after Pennsylvania, which lowered the vaccination age to 9. In Pennsylvania, Rite Aid alone has given over 9,000 influenza shots to patients under the age of 18 since the law was enacted in August 2015.

HB 5129 would provide parents the option to have their children and/or adolescents twelve years of age and older, to be immunized for influenza, by a licensed pharmacist. This bill in no way prevents parents from choosing to have their children immunized at their primary care physician's office. What it does do is increase access for parental choice, increases convenience for accessing services after working hours and on the weekends, and takes a significant step in helping raise immunization rates to save lives. With approximately 1000 chain and independent pharmacies in Connecticut, HB 5129 would provide widespread and convenient access points for our children and adolescents to life saving vaccines in a safe environment by a licensed pharmacist immunizer.

Pharmacist Qualifications

Connecticut's pharmacists are highly-trained health care professionals having completed either 5 or 6 years at an accredited school of Pharmacy to obtain their degree. Their expertise is in medication therapy – including, but not limited to, immunizations.

In addition to their training at accredited Schools of Pharmacy, pharmacists also complete an extensive immunization training course maintained by the American Pharmacists Association which was developed by a cooperative agreement in association with the National Immunization Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is recognized and accepted by all 50 State Boards of Pharmacy and the District of Columbia. This training includes proper screening to determine the types of immunization needed by an individual, as well as procedures for handling emergency reactions. This course does train pharmacists on pediatric and adolescent immunizations as well as on adult immunizations.

In addition to their educational background and the American Pharmacists Association Immunization Training Program, all immunizing pharmacists are required to be trained to provide Healthcare Provider Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and must remain current (every 2 years) on this training.

While adverse reactions to immunizations are rare, pharmacists' training also involves recognition of syncope (fainting) which is the most common reaction or anaphylaxis, and the proper use and administration of epinephrine, the treatment of choice for anaphylactic reactions. It should be noted that nurses providing immunizations without the direct supervision of a physician, bring only this same treatment, epinephrine, to handle anaphylactic reactions when immunizing children and adults as well.

Healthcare Provider Partnership

We recognize and applaud the efforts of physicians, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in providing immunizations to children, adolescents and adults in our State. We do wish to point out that the inclusion of a pharmacist within that mix of healthcare providers for children of any age group would increase access points and increase immunization rates within our state. Our current program at Rite Aid mandates communication to a Primary Care Physician in regards to all immunizations provided, if one is identified. We would also welcome participation in the state's Immunization Registry Program.

Reasons to Increase Access to Immunizations for Children and Adolescents

I am certain that the goal of this committee and all interested parties testifying regarding this bill is to improve the health and well-being of Connecticut's most valuable asset, our children. That said our goal should be to provide as many safe access points as possible to life saving immunizations, through qualified healthcare professionals, including pharmacists.

The following points highlight the need for additional access points through community pharmacy:

- In the 2009 influenza pandemic, the CDC reported 348 pediatric deaths associated with influenza; in the 2010-2011 flu season 115 deaths of children under the age of 18 occurred.
- Flu-Survey Net reported a hospitalization rate, due to influenza, of 45.7 per 100,000 children aged 0-4 years old and 8.9 per 100,000 for children aged 5-17 for the 2010-2011 influenza season. There are other cases of influenza that don't result in hospitalizations but are treated in the Emergency Room. The average visit to an emergency room costs \$383. The cost of an

influenza vaccine is approximately \$30. Our goal should also be that no child is hospitalized or has to be treated in an emergency room for a vaccine preventable disease

- Pharmacists have demonstrated their value in states where they can provide immunizations to any age group. In California the state went from 10 Pertussis deaths in children in 2010 to none in 2011 based on regulatory requirements for school age children and improving access points to the Tdap vaccination through the use of Community Pharmacy.
- In CT there are close to 1000 pharmacies located in both urban and rural areas. Pharmacies are a significant and important access point for health care services in rural communities. Many pharmacies provide access to needed immunizations during evening and weekend hours, on a walk-in, no-appointment-needed basis. With pharmacies providing this convenient option to working families, I believe we can partner to significantly increase pediatric and adolescent immunization rates in the great state of Connecticut.