



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

MICHELLE H. SEAGULL | COMMISSIONER

Testimony of Michelle Seagull Commissioner of Consumer Protection

General Law Committee Public Hearing, March 12, 2019

HOUSE BILL 7159 “AN ACT ADDRESSING OPIOID USE”

Senator Fonfara, Senator Witkos, Representative D’Agostino, Representative Cheeseman and Honorable Members of the General Law Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding several of the bills on your agenda for today’s public hearing.

I am Michelle Seagull, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). I am here today to offer testimony in support of HB 7159, An Act Addressing Opioid Use. DCP appreciates this opportunity to express enthusiastic support for the Governor’s proposed legislation, which would make several changes to DCP’s Drug Control Statutes in order to strengthen patient care as well as the tools available to DCP in the ongoing fight to combat the prescription drug misuse and abuse epidemic.

First, this bill would require that pharmacists offer counseling to patients regarding their prescriptions. Currently, Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 20-620, requires pharmacists to offer such counseling, but only to Medicaid patients. Expanding this requirement to all patients will encourage a dialogue between patients and pharmacists at the point of dispensing which will allow pharmacists to ensure that patients understand the importance of the medication and that they are using the medicine properly. This will also increase opportunities for pharmacists to

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catch errors, flag drug interactions, and when dispensing controlled substances, discuss the potential for abuse and overdose, and offer naloxone as a safety precaution. Many pharmacies already do this to ensure that all of their patients are better informed about the proper way to administer their medicine, possible side effects and other issues about which patients might have questions or concerns.

This proposed legislation would also allow pharmacists to designate an authorized agent to utilize the Connecticut Prescription Monitoring and Reporting System (CPMRS) to lookup patients, similar to prescribing practitioners and their designees. While pharmacists aren't required to look patients up in the CPMRS, they often do, and we believe allowing them to designate a pharmacy technician to assist with that process will increase the efficiency of their utilization and thereby encourage more use. Increased utilization of the CPMRS adds another level of protection of patients and can assist in identifying controlled substance misuse and abuse.

This bill would also require that when a drug manufacturer or wholesaler terminates or declines a pharmacy's business they report said action to DCP. Last legislative session, the Legislature passed a requirement that suspicious orders be reported, this would further strengthen investigatory tools and allow the department to identify issues faster.

Additionally, this proposal would require a practitioner who writes a prescription for an opioid to include on the prescription a diagnosis code, consistent with the International Classification of Diseases, for the medical condition being treated. This will further enhance patient care by providing a pharmacist with information at the time of dispensing that will allow them to fill a prescription for patients who truly need these medications. In addition, this information will minimize delays in dispensing opioid medication to patients in need because pertinent information will be on the prescription.

Finally, if enacted, this legislation would also require a practitioner who writes a prescription for an opioid drug to a patient for a period of more than 12 weeks for the treatment of pain, to establish a treatment agreement with the patient, which would need to include

treatment goals, risks of using opioids, and urine drug screens. The risk of addiction and other complications is significant for patients who take opioids on a long term basis. Requiring such an agreement, which some practitioners already do, will ensure that patients and prescribing practitioner are setting more clear plans around the use of opioid medications.

DCP, looks forward to continuing our work with Governor Lamont's Office, our sister agencies, this Legislature and our various counterparts in the health care industry.

Thank you again for allowing us to provide information about this proposal. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.