



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE
MARCH 12, 2019**

HB 7159, AN ACT ADDRESSING OPIOID USE

Chairmen D'Agostino and Fonfara, and members of the Committee:

My name is Nathan Tinker, and I am chief executive of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association, which represents over 1,000 pharmacists, technicians, students, and others in every pharmacy setting across the state.

The opioid epidemic has hit Connecticut hard, and as a profession whose entire focus is the safe and effective use of all medications—including pain medications—pharmacists have been at the forefront of this crisis since its inception.

HB 7159 offers a number of paths to addressing the opioid problem and we support it, but we do have some brief comments about the bill's potential impact on pharmacy practice.

First, HB 7159 requires pharmacists to offer counseling to patients receiving opioids. As a matter of course, pharmacies already ask every patient whether they have any questions regarding their medications, and opioids are no exception. Pharmacists are always ready and willing to provide this service to their patients, which has been shown to improve adherence and patient outcomes.

Second, HB 7159 offers the opportunity for pharmacists to designate a pharmacy technician to access the electronic prescription drug monitoring program. We believe that with appropriate training and certification of technicians, this can be a useful tool to help pharmacists perform their duties more quickly and efficiently. It should be clear that utilizing a technician in this role is at the discretion of a given pharmacist and only with duly trained/certified technicians.

Finally, HB 7159 requires prescribers to include a "diagnosis code" (ICD) on any opioid prescription, which is already a requirement for Medicaid. We are somewhat concerned that extending this rule to *any* opioid prescription, regardless of insurance or payer, will necessarily increase the number of times pharmacists must reach out to prescribers for clarification which, in turn, could lead to delays in delivering prescriptions to patients in need. It is also possible that this requirement could put pharmacies at risk of fines or having reimbursement threatened during an audit.

As always, Connecticut's pharmacists are ready to work closely with DCP and the Legislature to assure safety and quality in our practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bill.

Nathan Tinker
CEO
Connecticut Pharmacists Association