

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-94

AN ACT ALLOWING PHARMACISTS TO ADMINISTER THE INFLUENZA
Title: VACCINE TO CHILDREN TWELVE YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER.

Vote Date: 3/1/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/25/2019

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

Currently in Connecticut, pharmacists are permitted to administer vaccines to adults that are included on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) adult immunization schedule. This bill would expand service to allow pharmacists to administer the federally approved flu vaccine to children 12 years or older. The pharmacist must have an order from a licensed health care provider and adhere to the Department of Consumer Protection regulations.

Substitute language: “added a requirement for parental or guardian consent to this bill”.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dr. Raul Pino, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH): The DPH supports this legislation. Each year, influenza is a huge burden on the health of our citizens resulting in numerous outpatient clinic and emergency room visits many resulting in costly hospitalizations. During the 2017-2018 flu season, 3 children in Connecticut died. On the national level, of the 177 flu-related deaths among children, 78% of those children had not been vaccinated.

There are numerous pharmacies with extended hours that could augment access to the vaccine, as well as reduce the burden faced by pediatric providers who have a short window of time – September through December –to vaccinate their entire patient population.

As stated in his recent budget address, Governor Lamont supports efforts to expand access to the flu vaccine as part of the Connecticut Vaccine Program (CVP). If this legislation is

passed, pharmacists would be able to participate in the CVP along with 700 current CVP providers in offering this vaccine to children.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ben Davis, Pharmacist from Walgreens: Mr. Davis supports this legislation which would improve access to affordable, safe and preventable health care to an age-group often forgotten. Pharmacies offer extended hours as well as weekend access and are staffed by trusted health care professionals. These benefits place pharmacies in an ideal position to have a major impact on reducing vaccine-preventable illnesses. Currently, pharmacists in states such as New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island are safely administering flu vaccine to this age group. In regard to recent outbreaks of measles reported across our country, permitting increased access to improve immunization would benefit all our citizens.

Pharmacists from Stop and Shop: This group testified in support of this legislation. The convenience and accessibility afforded by pharmacies is a major factor in improved immunization rates. They shared that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends “expanding access through use of non-traditional settings for vaccinations, such as pharmacies, to reach individuals who may not visit a traditional physician’s office during the flu season”. Currently, a number of states allow pharmacists to administer the flu vaccine to this age group. The pharmacists encourage Connecticut this growing number of states.

Carrie Rand-Anastasiasdes representing The Connecticut Association of Community Pharmacists (CACP): The CACP supports this legislation which would increase access to a life-saving vaccine and complement the work of physicians. Currently, thousands of trained and licensed pharmacists are administering approved vaccines and are willing to be part of the effort to increase vaccination rates in our state. The flu vaccine is the only vaccine that is recommended to be given every year. Many pharmacies offer access before and after school, on weekends and offer 24 hour accessibility, 7 days a week providing a convenience to parents, especially in rural areas.

In 2009, TRICARE, the health insurance program for military personnel, began covering flu vaccines given by a pharmacist for both adults and children. This policy was so successful in raising immunization rates and reducing costs that, two years later, TRICARE published a final rule extending this service to cover all CDC- recommended vaccines. The final text read “the value of vaccines lies in the prevention of disease and reduced health care costs annually. When vaccines are more readily assessable, a broader section of the population will receive them.” Pharmacists are ready to assist in this effort.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Dr. Sandra Carbonari, Director of the American Academy of Pediatrics: Dr. Carbonari is opposed to this bill. This season alone there were 10 different vaccines in 17 different presentations with a number of age requirements offered through 2 delivery systems, intramuscular and intranasal. Determining the appropriate vaccine for a young patient requires accurate information regarding medical history and the current state of health of the

patient. Pharmacists do not have access to a child's medical record and could negatively impact the model of care that is an integral part of the Connecticut State Innovation model to improve health outcomes while containing costs. Additionally, if the goal of this legislation is to increase access and reduce costs, then pharmacies must be required to accept Medicaid patients. Currently, the Connecticut Vaccine Program (CVP) requires that providers of vaccine for Vaccine for Children (VFC) eligible children (including those on HUSKY) get the vaccines through this program. Due to the many regulations and extensive record keeping required by the CVP, it becomes very costly to adhere to these requirements. There is also concern that this increased cost would lead to the flu vaccine being available only to non-Medicaid patients. It is also not clear if current DPH staffing would be able to handle the increase in number of providers in the CVP, potentially leading to increased cost to the Department. Getting the vaccine outside of a doctor's office prevents the physician from assessing other conditions that may exist for the child, fragmenting care and potentially placing a burden on primary care practices.

Dr. Elissa Diamond-Fields, Ex. Director of Advocacy, Health Choice CT: Strongly opposes this legislation. Reports of injuries have increased as more people receive vaccines in pharmacies and supermarkets. Pharmacists do not have the training in anatomy needed to properly administer vaccines. Although administering vaccines is profitable for pharmacies and it has now become a routine part of their job, many pharmacists were never looking for this role of active clinical care. A pharmacy does not have access to a teen's health history and this can be potentially dangerous since 50% of our pediatric population is living with a chronic health issue. The CDC's Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VERS) has received over 1800 reports of ER visits following flu shots in 12 to 18 year olds along with 433 hospitalizations and 17 reported deaths. Due to limited clinical experience, pharmacists are not trained to recognize and manage such adverse events. Please keep children's care where it belongs with their providers.

Neal Lustig, MPH, Director of Health, Pomeroy Health District, Southbury: Opposes this legislation and speaks to an unintended consequence if it should pass. Recognizing that the shifting health care situations result in competition among different health care delivery systems, many of the Visiting Nurse agencies, Local Health Departments and private practice physicians experienced a dramatic loss of patients while pharmacies have gained. However, the negative impact on the delivery of preventative services should not be overlooked. Without access to a patient, certain public health officials are no longer available to work in the education and prevention of cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Regarding CT Medicaid or Husky patients, Mr. Lustig points out that to receive a mandated free vaccine from the state, the healthcare entity must be certified and approved by the Connecticut Vaccine Program (CVP). Mr. Lustig does not know of any pharmacy in CT participating in the CVP and therefore they are unable to access the state supply of vaccine. Since the flu vaccine under the ACA is required to be provided at no cost, the only children the pharmacy can vaccinate are those insured through private insurance. This is another unintended consequence of this legislation.

Dr. Jackie Flynn: Dr. Flynn opposes this legislation believing any such decisions should remain between the parent and the family doctor who is familiar with parental concerns and health history. Side effects that can be associated with vaccines make it a risk/reward decision that should not be made by government. Dr. Flynn is also concerned about

incentives offered by some pharmacies to entice children to have the vaccine. Since a child may not be fully aware of the risks that may be associated with a vaccine, what is to prevent a child from going to more than one pharmacy to take advantage of a “reward.”

Anne Manusky, First Vice President , Connecticut Republican Assembly (CTRA):

Ms. Manusky opposes this bill believing it is more about control rather than necessity. This bill goes against the rights of parents to act on behalf of their children.

Pazit Edelman: Opposes the bill that infringes upon parental, medical and religious freedoms. According to his testimony, the US Supreme Court has determined that vaccines are unavoidably unsafe. Allowing a vaccination by a pharmacy with little or no knowledge of medical history compounds this hazard. Children cannot provide informed consent.

Pam Lucashu, Durham CT: As a concerned parent, Ms. Lucashu opposes this legislation which does not require parental consent. Under this bill, a minor appearing alone, unfamiliar with their own medical/health history could obtain a shot from a pharmacist without backup medical personnel to intervene in case of an adverse reaction. Also, if a minor receives a shot and does not disclose it to the parent, there is a risk the child could receive multiple doses.

Andrea Fine Stratford, CT: Opposes this legislation and is concerned that pharmacies are not trained, licensed or equipped to handle potential adverse events. She also firmly believes that parental consent is critical for children this age.

There were an approximately 125 pieces of additional testimony submitted by concerned parents who oppose this legislation for the reasons outlined above.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 9, 2019