

Testimony re: HB 6543, AN ACT PERMITTING PHARMACISTS TO PRESCRIBE TOBACCO CESSATION PRODUCTS

Dear Chairman Abrams and Chairman Steinberg; Senator Somers and Representative Petit, and members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Gillian Kuszewski. I am a Clinical Pharmacist at UConn Health in Farmington, Connecticut.

I am writing in strong support of HB 6543, An Act Permitting Pharmacists to Prescribe Tobacco Cessation Products.

Tobacco use remains a major public health problem. It is costly to the health system and a leading cause of many of the critical illnesses I see in patients at UConn Health. These patients have costly medical stays, creating a burden for healthcare payers. HB 6543 seems to me to be a “no-brainer.”

Similar to giving pharmacists the ability to prescribe naloxone to address the opioid public health crisis, this tobacco cessation initiative is long overdue. Pharmacists are deeply qualified and trained healthcare professionals with special expertise in drug effects and interactions; pharmacies are part of the local community, and as members of the community, they have exceptional availability to patients; and, importantly, patients visit pharmacies far more often than they visit their physician. Pharmacists also have an understanding of medication coverage through the pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and can assist with getting products to patients provided under their pharmacy benefits.

In other states, pharmacists have been providing tobacco cessation products for over 15 years without any problems.

The fact is that pharmacists can have a huge, positive impact in helping people to quit tobacco and I urge you to support HB 6543. This improves public health and reduces overall healthcare costs.

Thank you,

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