

March 1, 2019

The Honorable Mary Abrams
The Honorable Jonathan Steinberg
300 Capitol Avenue Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairs Abrams and Steinberg:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) in support of HB 6543. This bill would amend the general statutes to permit pharmacists to prescribe tobacco cessation products.

NCPA represents the interests of America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 22,000 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 159 independent community pharmacies in Connecticut. Our members are often the most accessible health care providers in their communities, with 76 percent of our members serving patients in areas with a population of less than 50,000.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, and according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly seven out of every 10 people who smoke report a desire to quit.^{1,2} Since smoking cessation decisions are often spontaneous, the accessibility of community pharmacists is especially important for patients who have a desire to quit smoking. In addition to accessibility, patients who receive tobacco cessation medications and counseling from pharmacists have been shown to have significantly higher quit rates, especially for sustained tobacco cessation of six months or longer.^{3,4} In fact, independent community pharmacists providing nicotine replacement therapy in conjunction with counseling have been shown to produce quit rates of 40 percent at 10 weeks and 33 percent at 24 weeks, well above the national average.⁵

Allowing pharmacists to prescribe tobacco cessation products is not only effective in helping patients quit smoking, it is a safe option to improve public health. There is no increased risk to allowing pharmacists to prescribe and counsel on tobacco cessation products in addition to

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & Tobacco Use: Fast Facts. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Quitting Smoking. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm

³ Chen T, Kazerooni R, Vannort EM, Nguyen K, Nguyen S, Harris J, Bounthavong M. Comparison of an Intensive Pharmacist-Managed Telephone Clinic With Standard of Care for Tobacco Cessation in a Veteran Population. *Health Promot Pract.* 2013; 15(4):512-520.

⁴ Shen X, Bachyrycz A, Anderson JR, Tinker D, Raisch DW. Quitting Patterns and Predictors of Success Among Participants in a Tobacco Cessation Program Provided by Pharmacists in New Mexico. *J Manag Care Pharm.* 2014;20(6):579-87.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pharmacists: Help Your Patients Quit Smoking. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/partners/health/pharmacist/>.

primary care providers; in fact, it could be argued that pharmacist prescribing could be safer and more effective for patients. Most pharmacists have a four-year, doctoral-level degree, and all have completed extensive coursework in pharmacology, drug selection, drug interactions, and clinical patient care. They are healthcare's medication experts. Due to their accessibility, pharmacists are also in a unique position to closely monitor patients on drug therapy for adverse reactions and events. High risk patients visit their community pharmacy an average of 35 times per year, compared to 3.5 visits per year to their primary care provider.⁶ This provides the pharmacist with many more monitoring and counseling opportunities to help patients through the difficult process of tobacco cessation.

Pharmacists prescribing tobacco cessation products is also cost-effective for the healthcare system. Healthcare costs over the lifetime of a smoker have been estimated to be \$21,000 more than a nonsmoker and \$5,000 more than a nonsmoker over just the next five years of their life.⁷ If pharmacists were to help increase quit rates by only 5 percent for the almost 40 million U.S. citizens who smoke, they could produce an estimated \$39.6 billion in healthcare savings over the lifetime of current individuals who smoke and at least \$9.5 billion over the next five years.

Pharmacists are highly educated, accessible medication experts who are in a unique position within their communities to improve public health and provide cost-effective access to care. For this reason, NCPA urges you to support the passage of HB 6543.

Sincerely,



Allie Jo Shipman, PharmD
Associate Director, State Government Affairs

cc: Members of the Joint Committee on Public Health

⁶ PrescribeWellness. Why the community pharmacist is key to medication adherence. Available at <https://blog.prescribewellness.com/2017/05/community-pharmacist-key-medication-adherence/>.

⁷ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Health Costs of Smokers vs. Former Smokers vs. Non-smokers and Related Savings from Quitting. Available at <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0327.pdf>.