



Testimony of Ben Davis, PharmD.

In Support of SB 94

Monday, February 25, 2019

Before the Public Health Committee

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Lesser, Representative Young, Senator Somers, Representative Petit and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Ben Davis, and I am a pharmacist at Walgreens. I am here to request your support for SB 94: An Act Allowing Pharmacists To Administer The Influenza Vaccine To Children Twelve Years Of Age And Older.

SB 94 would expand pharmacists' immunization capabilities for the influenza vaccine to minors 12 years and older. Currently, Connecticut pharmacists can only administer immunizations to anyone 18 years of age and older, and this has limited patient access. SB 94 will remove the 18 year age restriction, thereby improving access to affordable, safe and preventable health care for the patients of our state.

Adolescents as a group are an oft-forgotten about age group with respect to vaccinations, as much of the focus is on pediatric and elderly immunization rates. Allowing pharmacists, one of the most accessible groups of healthcare providers, to vaccinate adolescents should increase coverage rates, which benefits both them and the public as a whole. Walgreens and other CT pharmacies have been administering flu vaccine to adults over the age of 18 for more than 10 years, resulting in much higher overall immunization rates for that population. I am confident the same effect would occur in the adolescent population.

The unique access pharmacies offer to the public, including extended hours of operation and weekend availability, coupled with being a trusted health care professional, places pharmacies in an ideal position to have a major impact on reducing vaccine-preventable illnesses. Currently, every state allows pharmacists to administer vaccinations. Pharmacists are safely providing immunizations to children and adolescents as young as age two in New York, age nine in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, and age 12 in New Jersey.

With recent outbreaks of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, anything that can be done to improve immunization rates across the board would benefit the public as a whole. Furthermore, numerous physicians have stressed that they believe collaboration between physicians and pharmacists is key to increasing vaccination rates in Connecticut. Using pharmacists as immunizers is a convenient and easy way to boost rates, especially for the flu vaccine. According to the CDC, the flu broke records for deaths and illnesses in 2017-2018: 180 children in the United States that were old enough to receive a vaccination died from the flu this past season. 90% of those children were not vaccinated.

Thank you.