

Expanding Pharmacist Immunization Authority

- On behalf of chain pharmacies operating in Connecticut, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on Committee Bill No. 94 regarding pharmacists administering vaccines. We applaud your effort to expanding access for children over 12 years old to the influenza vaccine.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that while vaccines have reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed thousands each year, many Americans do not receive recommended vaccines. In fact, more than 50,000 individuals die each year from vaccine preventable diseases and thousands more suffer serious health problems.
- To help increase vaccination rates, the National Vaccine Advisory Committee's Standards for Adult Immunization Practice advises that all healthcare providers assess patients for their immunization status at every patient encounter and administer needed vaccines.ⁱ
- Community pharmacists are uniquely valuable, yet underutilized members of the health care team. Highly educated to provide patient care services, including vaccines, pharmacists are well-suited to help states increase their vaccination rates and further reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases.
- **In fact, as immunizers, pharmacists have been shown to increase overall vaccine rates.** A 2004 national study found that states that allowed pharmacists to provide influenza vaccines to older adults had higher rates of vaccination against influenza than states that did not allow pharmacists to provide such immunizations. The study suggests that pharmacists were not just shifting patient populations from medical clinics into pharmacies, but were actually identifying new, previously unvaccinated populations for immunization.ⁱⁱ
- **Pharmacies are also a crucial resource for increasing vaccine distribution reach and capacity and can help to avert a substantial number of symptomatic influenza cases, deaths, and cost during an epidemic of vaccine preventable disease.** A 2018 study simulating the spread of an influenza epidemic found that administering vaccines through pharmacies (in addition to traditional locations) during an epidemic can increase vaccination coverage, mitigating up to 23.7 million symptomatic influenza cases, providing cost-savings up to \$2.8 billion to third-party payers and \$99.8 billion to society. Noting that pharmacies have potential advantages as immunization sites including numerous locations in closer proximity to residential neighborhoods, extended operating hours seven days a week, and the ability to serve individuals (including those without an established healthcare provider) on a walk-in basis, the study concluded that pharmacies have a crucial

role to play in averting a substantial number of symptomatic influenza cases, deaths, and cost during an epidemic.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Community pharmacies offer a convenient option for the public to obtain their vaccines. The convenience factor appeals to the public and has led to increased vaccination rates for adolescents in particular.** A recent study on community pharmacy-provided vaccines revealed that patients accessing vaccinations during hours when traditional vaccine providers are unavailable are more likely to be younger than 65 years of age. Further, patients younger than 18 years of age received vaccinations during these “off-clinic hours” more than any other age-group in the study. Given that CDC reports that influenza vaccination rates were low for people aged 13 to 17 years (47.4%) and 18 to 49 years (26.9%) compared with those aged 65 years and older (59.6%)^{iv}, the availability of vaccines at community pharmacies create new opportunities to improve vaccination rates in these populations.^v
- **The majority of Americans prefer to receive vaccine services at their local pharmacy.** According to the PrescribeWellness 2017 Vaccination and Preventive Care Survey, the majority of Americans prefer visiting their local pharmacy to get recommended vaccines, as opposed to visiting the doctor's office. Of the 62% of survey respondents who chose pharmacy over practitioner, most of the reasons hinged upon convenience.
- **Pharmacists can help to increase overall vaccine rates in the adolescent population whose vaccination needs have not been adequately met through the current health care system.** According to an article published in the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the current health care system has not adequately met the vaccination needs of the adolescent population in the United States over the years. However, overall vaccine rates could potentially be increased through complementing the efforts of primary care physicians with efforts to deliver vaccines in other health care settings that adolescents tend to frequent, such as pharmacies.^{vi}

ⁱ <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/adults/for-practice/standards/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Steyer TE, Ragucci KR, Pearson WS, Mainous AG 3rd; “The role of pharmacists in the delivery of influenza vaccinations”; *Vaccine*; 2004;22(8): 1001-1006.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bartsch, S., Taitel, M., DePasse, J., Cox, S., Smith-Ray, R., et. Al; “Epidemiologic and Economic Impact of Pharmacies as Vaccination Locations During an Influenza Epidemic”; *Vaccine*; 2018; 36(46): 7054-7063.

^{iv} <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/reportshtml/report1718/reportii/index.html>

^v Goad JA, Taitel MS, Fensterheim LE, Cannon AE; “Vaccinations Administered During Off-Clinic Hours at a National Community Pharmacy: Implications for Increasing Patient Access and Convenience”; *Annals of Family Medicine*; 2013;11(5): 429-436.

^{vi} Schaffer, S., Fontanesi, J., Rickert, D., Grabenstein, J., Rothholz, M., Wang, S., et al. (2008); “How Effectively Can Health Care Settings Beyond the Traditional Medical Home Provide Vaccines to Adolescents?; *Pediatrics (Vol. 121, pp. S35-S45)*.