



**Testimony before the Public Health Committee
February 25, 2019**

**SB 94, AN ACT ALLOWING PHARMACISTS TO ADMINISTER THE INFLUENZA
VACCINE TO CHILDREN TWELVE YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER.**

Good Morning Chairman Abrams and Chairman Steinberg; Senator Somers and Representative Petit, and members of the Committee.

My name is Nathan Tinker, and I am Chief Executive of the Connecticut Pharmacists Association which represents more than 1,000 pharmacists, technicians, and students across all sectors of the pharmacy industry in Connecticut. I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB 94, An Act Allowing Pharmacists to Administer the Influenza Vaccine to Children Twelve Year of Age and Older.

Currently, Connecticut pharmacists can only administer immunizations to anyone 18 years of age and older—this has limited patient access to an important public health initiative, and inhibits the opportunities for parents to get their children vaccinated quickly and efficiently. SB 94 will remove the 18 year age restriction, therefore improving access to affordable, safe, and preventable health care for the children of Connecticut.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The impact of this lack of access can be significant. A recent study showed that, each year, caregivers of children infected with the influenza virus spend approximately \$300-\$4,000 on medical care and lose 11-19 work hours while with their children in outpatient or emergency room visits. A parent of a hospitalized child loses an average of 73 work hours.¹

Currently, every state allows pharmacists to administer vaccinations. Pharmacists are safely providing immunizations to children and adolescents seven years of age and older in 24 states and 36 states allow trained pharmacy interns to administer immunizations. Doing so increases vaccination rates: one study in Washington State found that they increased vaccine administration rates by 41.4% over six months.²

PHARMACIES PROVIDE BETTER PATIENT ACCESS

In 2015 Pennsylvania expanded their law to allow pharmacists to immunize children 9 years and older. Earlier this month, the journal *Innovation in Pharmacy* published the results of a pilot study of Pennsylvania's new flu vaccine regulations. The results of the study illuminated a major impact on the ability for parents to access flu vaccine for their children: "The opportunity

¹ Ortega-Sanchez IR, Molinari NA, Fairbrother G et al. Indirect, out-of-pocket and medical costs from influenza-related illness in young children. *Vaccine*. 2012; 30:175-81.

² Hamm, Nicholas. "Pharmacists Increase Vaccination Rates." *Drug Topics*, Aug 22, 2017. <https://www.drugtopics.com/community-practice/pharmacists-increase-vaccination-rates>

to receive an influenza vaccination quickly, without an appointment, are the most important factors to parents and peers.”³

On average, patients visit pharmacies 14 or more times per year, versus 2-3 visits to the doctor’s office. And pharmacies offer unique access for patients, including extended hours of operation and weekend availability, coupled with being a trusted health care professional.

PHARMACISTS ARE TRAINED EXPERTS IN VACCINE ADMINISTRATION

Importantly, pharmacists receive extensive training to administer immunizations, both during their schooling and during their professional careers. In Connecticut, pharmacists who administer vaccines are required to complete updated continuing education annually. Indeed, the American Pharmacists Association provides certification in pharmacy-based immunization delivery—the curriculum is nationally recognized and involves the complete study of vaccines, their use, proper administration, patient screening, and emergency response. It is as rigorous as other healthcare professionals. Further, the Connecticut Pharmacists Association provides a comprehensive “immunization toolkit” to our members.

In other words, pharmacists have the training, the tools, and the expertise needed to safely administer flu vaccine, a view supported by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which recently issued a letter stating “pharmacists and community vaccinators are uniquely positioned to promote and provide vaccines. In addition, their extensive reach into diverse communities allows greater access to vaccines for those who may not have a medical home and who have traditionally had lower rates of vaccine use.”

In all, the potential impact of SB 94 is clear and simple: it will make it easier, faster, and cheaper to protect Connecticut’s children from flu and we urge you to support it.

Nathan Tinker
CEO
Connecticut Pharmacists Association

³ “Increasing Childhood Influenza Vaccinations at the Community Pharmacy in Pennsylvania: Important Factors to Parents and Their Peers—A Pilot Study”. *Innovations in Pharmacy*, 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1, Article 8. <http://z.umn.edu/INNOVATIONS>