

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Representative Rob Nosse, Chair
The Honorable Representative Travis Nelson, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 2942 – RELATING TO REIMBURSEMENT OF PHARMACY SERVICES

Chairperson Nosse, Vice Chairperson Nelson, and members of the Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **HOUSE BILL 2942**, a bill that requires the Oregon Health Authority and care coordinated organizations to reimburse pharmacists in the same manner as other licensed providers for services related to HIV care. Expanding access to HIV prevention through pharmacies effectively utilizes pharmacists' education and training to reach underserved populations. Approval of this legislation will lead to HIV related cost savings while combating the spread of the virus by identifying the virus early and preventing disease progression.

NCPA represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including more than 19,400 independent community pharmacists across the United States, including 85 independent pharmacies in Oregon. These Oregon pharmacies filled over 5 million prescriptions last year and employ 551 employees, impacting thousands of patients in your state.

The HIV epidemic remains a significant public health challenge in the United States, with more than 1.2 million people affected and despite the progress there is much more work to be done. Over 90% of Americans live within five miles of a community pharmacy¹. More than any other segment of the pharmacy industry, independent community pharmacists are often located in the most underserved rural and urban areas and are frequently the most accessible healthcare providers in many communities and are critical for the provision of immunizations and other preventive care service in the community.

Within the next 10 years, the U.S. could see a shortage of over 55,000 primary care physicians.² In Oregon there are 167 areas that are designated as health professional shortage areas.³ There are thousands of pharmacists in Oregon who are ready to provide valuable healthcare services to these communities that have limited access to

¹ NCPDP Pharmacy File, ArcGIS Census Tract File, NACDS Economics Department.

² Association of American Medical Colleges. 2019 UPDATE The Complexities Of Physician Supply And Demand Projections From 2017 To 2032. Available at: https://aamcblack.global.ssl.fastly.net/production/media/filer_public/31/13/3113ee5c-a038-4c16-89af-294a69826650/2019_update_-_the_complexities_of_physician_supply_and_demand_-_projections_from_2017-2032.pdf

³ Kaiser Family Foundation. Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). Timeframe: as of September 30, 2019. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/stateindicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas/psas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

care.⁴ By realigning financial incentives and reimbursing pharmacists for their services similar to other health care professionals there will be greater access to the vital health care services pharmacists provide.

This is an opportunity to empower pharmacists in Oregon and leverage the state's public health infrastructure to create equitable access to HIV services via community pharmacies. Pharmacists are proud to play a vital role in Oregon's efforts to increase access to HIV care. Access to pharmacy care services along with HIV PrEP and PEP medications will play a critical role in combating the HIV epidemic and staving off costly downstream medical interventions. Pharmacists training in clinical services, disease state management and interpretation of lab data will be appropriately utilized and compensated for by recognizing pharmacists as a competent arm in combating the HIV epidemic and improving patient lives in Oregon.

As you may be aware, many of our community pharmacies, especially those in rural communities⁵, are closing because of the current unsustainable reimbursement model in the drug supply chain. This often hits Mom-and-Pop independent pharmacies the hardest and can cause the elimination of a needed healthcare professional and cornerstone of our communities. The reimbursement for HIV care services provided by pharmacists opens additional revenue opportunities for these pharmacists to maintain their practice and the provision of valuable services to our communities.

HB 2492 will improve patient access to HIV care and aid in reducing spending related to HIV care while challenging the progression of the disease. To protect Oregonians, we respectfully ask you to support **HB 2492**. If you have any questions about the information contained in this letter or wish to discuss the issue in greater detail, please do not hesitate to contact me at belawoe.akwakoku@ncpa.org or (703) 600-1179.

Sincerely,



Belawoe Akwakoku
Associate Director, State Government Affairs
National Community Pharmacists Association

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Employment Statistics Query System. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/home>.

⁵ Hawryluk M. Large parts of rural America are becoming drugstore deserts. These small towns found an escape. *The Washington Post*. Published December 15, 2021. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/12/03/drugstore-deserts-rural-america/>