

March 24, 2023

Representative Kevin McCarthy
House Majority Leader
Rayburn House Office Building 2468
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
Hart Senate Office Building SH-322
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
Rayburn House Office Building 2433
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
Russell Senate Office Building SR-317
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support Federal Legislation to Ensure Patient Access to Essential Pharmacist Services

Dear Representatives McCarthy and Jeffries and Senators Schumer and McConnell,

In the diverse communities we represent, one theme remains constant: Americans rely on pharmacists to access critical care and services to manage their health. The pandemic reinforced how essential pharmacists are to our nation's public health response, as pharmacists time and again acted with urgency and flexibility to protect vulnerable communities from COVID-19. Unfortunately, current federal barriers threaten patient access to critical pharmacist services for millions of America's seniors. On behalf of the communities we serve – including older Americans, patients of color, rural communities, and others with limited access to health care – we urge you to work with Members of Congress to support and enact H.R. 1770, the Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services Act. This critical legislation will ensure seniors maintain access to essential pharmacist services and strengthen our nation's public health response in the process.

Pharmacists are the first and most accessible health care provider for many patient communities. Nine in ten Americans live within five miles of a pharmacy, and patients visit their community pharmacist approximately twice as frequently as they visit primary care physicians. Throughout the pandemic, pharmacists continuously responded to a rapidly changing public health environment to protect vulnerable communities from the threat of COVID-19. Pharmacists in the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program alone have administered over 300 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine, and pharmacies have been cited as providing more than two out of every three COVID-19 vaccine doses.

Unfortunately, pharmacists continue to operate under a fragile foundation of temporary authorities that were put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The end of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 and uncertainty surrounding the future of the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act threatens patient access to pharmacist care for millions of America's seniors.

Without immediate action, seniors will experience difficulty obtaining pharmacist services upon which they have come to rely during the pandemic, endangering the health and well-being of the most vulnerable individuals in our health care system. Among necessary steps, Congress must act with urgency to codify the front-line role pharmacists play to deliver essential care and services to America's seniors to protect vulnerable patient communities, strengthen our nation's public health response, and better prepare for future infectious disease threats. H.R. 1770 would ensure Medicare Part B

beneficiaries can benefit from pharmacist services related to COVID-19 and other infections with similar presentation, including testing, immunization, and treatment initiation.

We urge you to support and advance the Equitable Community Access to Pharmacist Services Act (H.R. 1770) to provide payment for essential pharmacist services under Medicare Part B and ensure pharmacists can continue to protect seniors from the threat of COVID-19, influenza, and other infectious diseases.

We commend Congress for its ongoing efforts to improve the health and well-being of America's seniors and appreciate your leadership and support on this critical patient issue.

Sincerely,

**Advocates for Responsible Care
The AIDS Institute
Aimed Alliance
Alliance for Aging Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association (ADA)
Arthritis Foundation
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF)
Autoimmune Association
California Hepatitis C Task Force
Cancer Support Community (CSC)
Caregiver Action Network
Caring Ambassadors, Inc.
Chronic Care Policy Alliance (CCPA)
Color of Crohn's & Chronic Illness (COCCI)
Community Liver Alliance (CLA)
Community Oncology Alliance (COA)
Exon 20 Group
Familia Unida Living with MS
FMI – The Food Industry Association
Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research
Friends of Cancer Research (FOCR)
Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF)
Healthcare Distribution Alliance
Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC)
Healthy Men Inc.
HealthyWomen
ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network
Immune Deficiency Foundation (IDF)
International Foundation for AiArthritis
Looms for Lupus
LUNgevity Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Men's Health Network (MHN)
National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC)**

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Consumers League (NCL)
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR)
Neuropathy Action Foundation (NAF)
Patients Rising Now
Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA)
RetireSafe
Rx in Reach GA Coalition
Spondylitis Association of America (SAA)
Veterans Patients Rising
West Health
ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer