

March 23, 2022

The Honorable Cristina Castro, Chairwoman
The Honorable Bill Cunningham, Vice-Chairman
Senate Executive Committee
Illinois State Capitol
212 East Capitol Avenue
Springfield, IL 62701

RE: NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF HB 4430

Dear Chair Castro, Vice Chair Cunningham, and committee members:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association in support of **HB 4430**. This legislation would increase patient access to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) pre-exposure (PrEP) and post-exposure (PEP) medications, and result in 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 owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 544 independent pharmacies in Illinois. These Illinois pharmacies filled over 31 million prescriptions last year, impacting the lives of thousands of patients in your state.

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. They critical for the provision of immunizations and other preventative care service in the community. In addition, community pharmacists are proud to play a vital role in Illinois's efforts to increase access to PrEP and PEP medications statewide. 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.

NCPA applauds the mandatory coverage language in HB 4430. Mandatory coverage provisions for pharmacists provided preventative health care services is paramount to the success of HB 4430. Because pharmacists undergo a minimum of six years of comprehensive undergraduate and professional education, and due to their training in clinical services, disease state management and interpretation of lab data, it is imperative that they be used to combat the HIV epidemic in Illinois. Furthermore, pharmacists should be appropriately compensated for providing these lifesaving medications.

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

Like other medical professions, the pharmacy profession has evolved from a dispensing and product-reimbursement based industry to a profession with the *training* and patient *relationships* to provide outcomes-based services and participate in care coordination efforts.² NCPA supports HB 4430 which requires the Illinois Department of Health to adopt an approved pharmacists training program for PrEP and PEP medications and services. The training program will aim to address the challenges and knowledge gaps, including but not limited to, counseling unique populations, recommending appropriate vaccinations, understanding HIV disease state, HIV medications along with how and when to exercise appropriate patient follow-up, and referring the patient to necessary resources and healthcare providers.

Such a training program will optimize efforts in supporting all facets of the patient's experience relating to PrEP and PEP services and ensure a high standard of care in carrying out the responsibilities aligned with lowering rates of HIV infection throughout the state.

HB 4430 would increase patient access to HIV PrEP and PEP medications and aid in reducing spending related to HIV care while combating the progression of the disease. To protect Illinoisans, we respectfully ask you to support HB 4430. 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
State Government Affairs Manager
National Community Pharmacists Association

² Troy Trygstad, *Payment Reform Meets Pharmacy Practice and Education Transformation*, 78 North Carolina Med. J. 3 at 173 -176 (May-June 2017), available at <http://www.ncmedicaljournal.com/content/8/3/173.full.pdf+html>