

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee Health and Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: NATIONAL COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 1245

Dear Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to send a letter in **support of SENATE BILL 1245**, a bill that requires public and private plans to reimburse for services provided by licensed pharmacists at the same rate for services rendered by another provider. This legislation expands access to health care services while providing cost-savings to state and local expenditures. SB 1245 ensures that patients have more time with their most accessible health care professional better aligns with the role of pharmacists with their extensive education and training.

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and 43 independent pharmacies in Hawaii. These Hawaii pharmacies filled 2.8 million prescriptions last year, impacting the lives of thousands of patients in your state.

Current commercial insurance policies within the state do not recognize pharmacists as providers that seek reimbursement for prescribing birth control, test and treat services & HIV drug administration despite covering services from other providers for the same service. Increased utilization of pharmacists' services has improved patient outcomes and reduced overall healthcare costs. Systematic reviews have indicated positive returns on investment when evaluating broader pharmacist services, with up to \$4 in benefits for every \$1 invested in clinical pharmacy services.¹

Within the next 10 years, the U.S. could see a shortage of over 55,000 primary care physicians.² In Hawaii there are 33 areas that are designated as health professional shortage areas.³ There are hundreds of pharmacists in Hawaii who are ready to provide valuable healthcare services to these communities that have limited access to

¹ Avalere. Exploring Pharmacists' Role in a Changing Healthcare Environment. May 21, 2014, available at: <https://avalere.com/insights/exploring-pharmacists-role-in-a-changing-healthcare-environment>.

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-areashpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D](https://www.kff.org/other/stateindicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas/areashpsas/?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.

To the benefit of this realignment substantial published literature documents the significant improvement to patient outcomes⁵ and reduction in health care expenditures⁶ when pharmacists are more optimally leveraged. Compilation of studies have found themes in these cost savings, including “decreased total health expenditures, decreased unnecessary care (e.g., fewer hospitalizations, emergency department [ED] visits, and physician visits), and decreased societal costs (e.g., missed or nonproductive workdays).”⁶ The adoption of **SENATE BILL 1245** would result in Hawaii joining other states, such as Ohio, Colorado, California, and Wisconsin as national leaders in empowering the pharmacist to better provide valuable services to their communities. In states where such legislation has already been implemented, we are observing health plans, notably Medicaid Managed Care Organizations recognizing the value of the pharmacist and investing in the services they provide.

NCPA submitted a letter of support for this same bill in 2024, SB 693, which did not pass out of conference committee and triggered an audit (SCR17) to conduct a financial and social assessment if pharmacy services would be under the medical benefit. The completed audit did not find any additional costs to the state’s health plans.

SENATE BILL 1245 will ensure that more patients have greater access to health care services provided by pharmacists while supporting the sustainability of local pharmacies in our communities. The adoption of this important legislation will ensure that citizens across the state of Hawaii are able to receive vital health care services provided by their pharmacist.

We appreciate the bill’s sponsor, Senator Buenaventura, and the Hawaii Pharmacists Association for championing this critical issue and urge this bill to be approved by this committee and brought to the floor for a full vote.

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 Giberson S, Yoder S, Lee MP. Improving Patient and Health System Outcomes through Advanced Pharmacy Practice. A Report to the U.S. Surgeon General. Office of the Chief Pharmacist. U.S. Public Health Service. Dec 2011. Available at: https://www.accp.com/docs/positions/misc/improving_patient_and_health_system_outcomes.pdf

⁶ Murphy EM, Rodis, JR, Mann HJ. Three ways to advocate for the economic value of the pharmacist in health care. Journal of the American Pharmacists Association. August 2020. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1544319120303927>