

January 30th, 2025

The Honorable Senator Davis
Senate Medical Affairs Sub Committee
The Senate of South Carolina
P.O. Box 142
Columbia, SC 29202

RE: S 2 – Section 17- Off-Label Prescribing

Chairman Davis and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on **S 2**, specifically Section 17 within the bill, that weakens a pharmacist's ability to ensure patient safety by preventing them from using both their independent judgement and expert understanding in prescription dispensing decisions. The only allows for pharmacists to refuse to fill "off-label" medications if there's a declared state of emergency. Pharmacists have supported off label prescribing in the past, but passage of this bill could lead to unintended consequences such as disruptions in the drug supply chain and delays in patient care.

NCPA represents the interest of America's community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 19,400 independent community pharmacies across the United States and independent community pharmacies in South Carolina that employ over 3,500 full-time employees who filled over 19.5 million prescriptions last year. Our members are small business owners who are among America's most accessible health care providers in many communities.

Off label prescribing is common and can be safe, however, this legislation minimizes pharmacist's role from the dispensing process, undercutting a serious check in patient care. The role of pharmacists is not to diagnose but to improve outcomes through medication. Their expertise is imperative in avoiding mixing drugs and health conditions which is a process already done without a diagnosis on the prescription. Section 17 of S 2 defines narrow parameters to allow a pharmacist to refuse to fill a prescription and restricts professional autonomy in administering care.

We urge the committee to take seriously the potential harm in Section 17 within S 2 could do if left within the bill, and to remove the section before moving forward with the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Belawoe Akwakoku". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

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