

May 27, 2014

The Honorable Fred Upton
Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Judiciary Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Judiciary Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Waxman, Chairman Goodlatte, and Ranking Member Conyers, Jr.:

On behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), I am writing in support of H.R. 4709. This bipartisan bill is scheduled to be considered in the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee tomorrow and was introduced by Representatives Marsha Blackburn (TN), Peter Welch (VT), Tom Marino (PA) and Judy Chu (CA). It seeks to prevent prescription drug abuse and diversion and ensure patient access to necessary medications by creating a more collaborative partnership between drug manufacturers, wholesalers, retail pharmacies, and federal enforcement and oversight agencies.

NCPA represents the interests of pharmacist owners, managers and employees of more than 23,000 independent community pharmacies across the United States. Together they employ over 300,000 full-time employees and dispense nearly half of the nation's retail prescription medicines. More than any other segment of the pharmacy industry, independent pharmacies are often located in underserved and rural areas. In fact, independent pharmacies represent 52 percent of all rural retail pharmacies and there are over 1,800 independent community pharmacies operating as the only retail pharmacy within their rural communities.

Millions of Americans depend on prescription drugs to treat and cure illness, alleviate pain, and improve quality of life. Unfortunately, prescription drug abuse kills tens of thousands of Americans each year and data shows that this number is steadily rising. Federal agencies and private parties in the drug supply chain are working diligently to prevent drug abuse and diversion; however, it is also imperative that patients with legitimate pain are able to obtain their prescriptions without disruption.

H.R. 4709 seeks to facilitate greater collaboration between industry stakeholders and regulators so that pharmacists can fill their patients' prescriptions when they are needed. Most importantly for our members it would allow them the opportunity to submit a corrective action plan prior to having their license revoked or suspended by DEA.

In conclusion, prescription drug abuse is a national epidemic that has claimed far too many lives across this Great Nation. We certainly appreciate the monumental task the DEA has in trying to stop the “bad actors” from continuing to operate. We want to be part of the solution to reduce abuse and diversion and look forward to more open communication lines with the Agency moving forward as we all have a vested interest in reducing abuse and diversion. Thank you for your attention to this letter and for your leadership on the Energy and Commerce and Judiciary Committees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Doug Hoey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "B. Doug" and last name "Hoey" clearly distinguishable.

B. Doug Hoey, R.Ph., M.B.A
Chief Executive Officer