



April 6, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone,

Walgreens and our approximately 30,000 pharmacists across the nation urge members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce to join 259 of your colleagues to champion the role of pharmacists, as front-line healthcare professionals, and the help they provide in filling the gaps for vulnerable populations in underserved communities. Many of these communities are also being ravaged by the opioid epidemic, indiscriminately destroying lives and families. As the face of community health care, Walgreens pharmacists care deeply about our neighbors and the impact this epidemic is having on the fabric of our communities.

That is why it is critically important the Committee support the *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act* (H.R. 592), enabling pharmacists even greater ability, as recognized non-physician providers in Medicare Part B, to provide clinical services to address unmet healthcare needs of Medicare beneficiaries in underserved communities. The bill would also authorize CMS to create a new pharmacist intervention program to prevent prescription drug abuse among Medicare beneficiaries by targeting at-risk patients identified in the CMS Overutilization Monitoring System. The program would allow pharmacists to engage with such patients to provide specialized opioid counseling, education and risk factor reduction services.

As the Committee demonstrates its leadership by developing comprehensive solutions to the opioid crisis, Walgreens stands ready to bring our own leadership, experience and capabilities to help in this critical effort to fight the disease of opioid drug addiction. Over the past two years, we have made significant contributions to address this issue, and, indeed, have been at the forefront of corporate America's efforts to fight the opioid epidemic. Our primary initiative includes making safe medication disposal receptacles available in more than 600 store locations in 45 states and DC, and we have started installation of an additional 900 receptacles in communities challenged by the opioid crisis. To date, we have collected nearly 200 tons of unused medication—most notably controlled substances at the heart of this epidemic—with the goal of collecting 300 more tons over the next two years.

Even more can be done for Medicare patients by increasing their access to pharmacists' services, which can help prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse as well as improve treatment outcomes. This is particularly important for seniors, as one out of every three Medicare Part D beneficiaries, in 2016, received at least one prescription opioid, 1 in 10 received opioids on a regular basis, and half a million received high amounts of opioids.¹

Walgreens, as a proud member of the Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition, thanks you for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to better utilize pharmacists to help Medicare beneficiaries access the care they need to positively impact this serious problem facing our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Gourlay', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alex Gourlay
Co-Chief Operating Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc.

¹ [HHS OIG Data Brief, July 2017 \(OEI-02-17-00250\)](#)