



April 3, 2018

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

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

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone,

The California Pharmacists Association is a member of the Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition (PAPCC), a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary initiative whose mission is to develop and help enact a federal policy proposal that would enable patient access to, and payment for, Medicare Part B services by state-licensed pharmacists in medically-underserved communities.

We write today to express appreciation for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic. California has been a leader in seeking solutions to this public health challenge and stand committed to working with Congress and other stakeholders to identify ways pharmacists can help curb opioid abuse and misuse and positively impact treatment. Pharmacists are the face of neighborhood healthcare with 89% of Americans living within five miles of a community pharmacy. In fact, pharmacists are frequently the health care professional that a patient will see most often. We believe that even greater engagement by pharmacists on the health care team can result in opportunities to improve outcomes for Medicare patients and reduce challenges, including those related to opioids.

Pharmacists play a unique role in patient care as they are the medication experts. While pharmacists are known for dispensing prescription medications and helping patients use them safely, today's pharmacists are trained and licensed to provide a number of additional services needed by many Medicare beneficiaries. In 2013, California was the first state to pass extensive expanded scope of practice legislation to ensure pharmacists can utilize their expansive training and receive payment for serving privately-insured and Medicaid patients. This includes pharmacists playing an important role in helping to address opioid misuse and abuse as well as treatment. For example, because pharmacists have access to the patient's complete medication profile, they can help bridge communication gaps that may exist among providers by coordinating and providing medication-related services. This is particularly important for patients living with chronic conditions who have medications from multiple providers.

Pharmacists are also involved in pain management programs that include medication tapering services and transitioning to non-opioid treatments; work in medication assisted treatment programs; and in California, can independently furnish the life-saving overdose reversal agent, naloxone. Further, California's Advanced Practice Pharmacists work under collaborative practice agreements to initiate, monitor, modify, and discontinue medication therapy, including opioids.

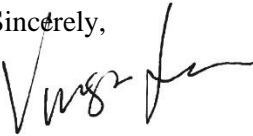
Given the prevalence of the opioid problem in communities across the country, pharmacists, who are already in these communities can help provide better management and monitoring services to fill the gap in access to care. As the medication experts on the patient's health care team and the most accessible health care practitioner in the community, it is of the utmost importance that Medicare patients also be

able to access pharmacists' services. Having broad access to pharmacists can help prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse and improve treatment outcomes.

Dozens of your colleagues have cosponsored the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act (H.R. 592) that would provide medically underserved beneficiaries with access to Medicare Part B services provided by pharmacists. We appreciate the Committee's attention to H.R. 592 and look forward to working with you on its passage as an important way to help address the opioid crisis.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and the Coalition partners to better utilize pharmacists to help Medicare beneficiaries access the care they need to positively impact this serious problem facing our nation. Should you have any questions, please contact Michelle Rivas, CPhA Vice President, at (916) 779-4517 .

Sincerely,



Vinson C. Lee, PharmD, MS, FCPHA, FAMCP
President



Jon R. Roth, MS, CAE
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Doris Matsui
 The Honorable Tony Cardenas
 The Honorable Anna Eshoo
 The Honorable Mimi Walters
 The Honorable Jerry McNerney
 The Honorable Dr. Raul Ruiz
 The Honorable Scott Peters