



April 4, 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:

Thank you for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic in our communities! As pharmacists, we are committed to working with Congress and other health professionals and stakeholders to identify ways pharmacists can help curb opioid abuse and misuse and positively impact treatment. We believe that engaging pharmacists on the health care team presents a unique opportunity to improve outcomes for Medicare patients and reduce challenges, including those related to opioids. Pharmacists play a unique role in patients' care as they are the medication experts, and with 89% of Americans living within five miles of a community pharmacy, the pharmacist is likely the health care professional that a patient will see the most. They are active in their communities and are very concerned about the care of their patients.

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. As part of the health care team, pharmacists can play an important role in helping to address opioid misuse and abuse and can be fully engaged with substance use disorder treatment. Given the prevalence of this 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.

Pharmacists are the medication experts on the patient's health care team and the most accessible health care practitioner. Accordingly, it is of the utmost importance that Medicare patients are able to access pharmacists' services, which can help prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse, in addition to improve treatment outcomes. Authorizing pharmacist clinical services in the Medicare Part B benefit would expand beneficiaries' access to care including medication and pain management services and treatment.

Scores 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 by pharmacists, consistent with state scope of practice law. 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.

Sincerely,

Larry D. Wagenknecht, Pharmacist
Chief Executive Officer

Copy: Representatives Upton, Walberg and Dingell