



April 6, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Walden,

Oregon State Pharmacy Association (OSPA) was founded in 1889 as a professional trade association representing its member community of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy students and others who have an interest in advancing the practice of pharmacy through advocacy and education and thereby improving the health of our fellow Oregonians.

We write today to express support and gratitude for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic. 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 by more fully engaging pharmacists on the health care team presents a unique opportunity to improve outcomes for 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, frequently the health care professional that a patient will see the most.

As the medication experts on the patient's health care team, pharmacists play an important role in helping patients manage chronic pain and preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse. Pharmacists are involved in pain management programs that include medication tapering services, work in medication assisted treatment programs and furnish naloxone. In Oregon, pharmacists have the authority to prescribe naloxone to any individual or entity seeking naloxone.

Pharmacists can help fight against the opioid epidemic by managing and optimizing the impact of medications, reviewing medications to help prevent overprescribing, tailoring care plans to patient needs, providing recommendations for non-opioid pain management alternative and educating patients regarding opioids.

One of the greatest barriers for pharmacists to provide these services is that pharmacists' clinical services are not covered under Medicare. As a result, beneficiaries' access to the health care practitioner with the most medication-related education and training is limited, and restricted mainly to services related only to the dispensing of medications. By not including pharmacists among other providers whose services are covered, Medicare also effectively makes it more difficult for other members of the health care team and patients to work with pharmacists as part of a coordinated, team-based approach to care.

OSPA urges The House Energy and Commerce Committee to advance *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act* (H.R. 592/S.109) to help prevent opioid abuse

and misuse, increase treatment options and better manage patients' pain through pharmacist-provided care.

It is critical that patients and other health care providers can utilize the medication experts on a care team as efforts to enhance prevention, patient education, prescribing, tapering and treatment of substance use disorder are implemented.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. We ask that you support and advance H.R. 592. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to better utilize pharmacist to help patients access the care they need to positively impact this serious problem facing our nation. Should you have any questions, please contact OSPA at 503-582-9055.

Sincerely,

Oregon State Pharmacy Association - Executive Committee

Kevin Russell, RPh, BCACP, Immediate Past President
Amy Valdez, RPh, President
Tiffanie Pye, PharmD, BCPS, President Elect
Linh Chau, RPh, Treasurer