



TEXAS *Pharmacy Association*

Together Pharmacy Advances

April 6, 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,

As CEO of the Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA), an association representing nearly 30,000 pharmacists in Texas, I write today to express support and gratitude for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic. TPA is committed to working with Congress and other health professionals and stakeholders to identify ways Texas pharmacists can help curb opioid abuse and misuse and positively impact treatment. We respectfully request that H.R. 592, the *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act*, be included in the opioid package of legislation which you are diligently working. We believe that H.R. 592 will help prevent opioid abuse and misuse, increase treatment options and better manage patients' pain through pharmacist-provided care; thus, helping communities in Texas address the opioid epidemic.

More fully 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 are on the frontlines of health care and play a unique role in patients' care. With 89% of Americans living within five miles of a community pharmacy, pharmacists are frequently the health care professional that patients see the most. As the most accessible health care practitioner, pharmacists can use their medication expertise to identify at-risk behaviors, better manage pain treatments, and educate patients and families about the safe use of opioids as well as the potential need for and appropriate use of medications to reverse the effects of narcotic drugs, such as naloxone. Pharmacists can also provide opioid management/preventive counseling and/or risk factor reduction interventions at the point of service, which has the potential to substantively reduce abuse.

While pharmacists have traditionally dispensed prescription medications and helped 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 as well as treatment. For example, because pharmacists see the patient's complete medication profile, they can help bridge any communication gap 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 working with other health care providers, improve care coordination and delivery, resulting in better health outcomes for Medicare patients. As the medication use experts, pharmacists can help

800.505.5463 (toll-free) | 512.836.8350 (local) | 512.836.0308 (fax)

3200 Steck Avenue, Suite 370 | Austin, Texas 78757



TEXAS Pharmacy Association

Together Pharmacy Advances

prescribers determine the optimal drug for the indication, determine duration, appropriate quantities to dispense in the outpatient settings, and oversee the plan through transitions of care. Given the prevalence of the opioid problem in communities across Texas and 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.

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 pain management education and treatment.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. The Texas Pharmacy Association welcomes 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 Texas and our nation. Should you have any questions, please contact me at Debbie.garza@texaspharmacy.org or (512) 615-9170.

Sincerely,

Debbie B. Garza, R.Ph.

Debbie B. Garza, R.Ph.
Texas Pharmacy Association, CEO