

The Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act (H.R. 2759/S. 1362)

Why is this needed?

Patients in medically underserved communities cannot easily access care. Legislation that would provide Medicare reimbursement to pharmacists would allow underserved beneficiaries to benefit from the wide range of patient care services pharmacists are trained to provide.

Background

The Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act (H.R. 2759/S. 1362) seeks to improve health outcomes and lower health care spending by giving Medicare beneficiaries living in medically underserved communities access to patient care services from their state-licensed pharmacist.

The relevant services would include only those permitted by individual states' scope of pharmacy practice and that Medicare Part B reimburses when they are delivered by other providers.

Pharmacists' patient care services

- Pharmacists are trained and qualified to administer immunizations, measure and monitor blood pressure and cholesterol, perform foot checks for patients with diabetes, furnish smoking cessation products, screen for depression and other mental health conditions, and more. Pharmacists can also perform point-of-care testing for blood glucose, cholesterol, influenza, strep, COVID-19, and more.
- Pharmacists can educate and counsel patients to help them stay healthy while reducing cost burdens on payers. Counseling and education may include how to:
 - Find the best medication, use medications and devices (e.g., inhalers, nebulizers) correctly, manage medications that are ineffective, and identify more affordable medication options.
 - More safely use opioids or switch to nonopioid treatments for chronic pain.
 - Manage chronic disease.
- Pharmacists are an important part of the comprehensive health care team. They work closely with their patients' other health care providers to enhance quality of care, improve health outcomes, and save money for the patient and health care system.

Pharmacists' value, education, and training

Today's pharmacists graduate with a Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree, a postgraduate degree that requires a minimum of 6 years to complete; some programs require 8 years. Pharmacists have more medication-related education and training than any other health care provider.

There are approximately 88,000 pharmacies in the United States today, and nearly 90% of the population lives within 5 miles of a pharmacy. Pharmacists are easy to reach and ready to help, but without Medicare reimbursement, they cannot sustainably provide patient care.

The ask

Please co sponsor H.R. 2759/S. 1362 by contacting Caitlin Van Sant (Caitlin.VanSant@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Butterfield's office, Kirsten Wing (kirsten.wing@mail.house.gov) in Rep. McKinley's office, Nic Pottebaum (nic_pottebaum@grassley.senate.gov) in Sen. Grassley's office or Samantha Koehler (samantha_koehler@aging.senate.gov) in Sen. Casey's office.