



January 28, 2019

The Honorable Evan Low, Chair  
Assembly Business & Professions Committee  
State Capitol, Room 4126  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 149 (Cooper) Controlled substances: prescriptions - SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Low,

The California Retailers Association (CRA) and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) are pleased to support AB 149 (Cooper), which makes critical modifications to AB 1753 (Low, Chpt. 479, Statutes of 2018) to ensure patients have continued access to necessary medications.

Effective January 1 of this year, AB 1753 required all prescription forms in California for controlled substances to be printed with new, uniquely serialized numbers. We applaud the goal of your bill, which was to combat the opioid epidemic and curb controlled substance abuse. Unfortunately, AB 1753 did not contain a transition period to allow prescribers to obtain the new forms, which put pharmacies in the difficult position of either being unable to provide crucial medication to patients, or violating the law.

AB 149 will address this unintended consequence by allowing for delayed, staggered implementation of AB 1753. The requirement for controlled substance prescription forms to contain uniquely serialized numbers will be effective January 1, 2020, and prescribers will be able to utilize otherwise valid prescription forms without the serialized numbers until January 1, 2021. After the enactment of AB 1753 in September, CRA and NACDS have been working with you, the Department of Justice and the Board of Pharmacy to address the implementation issues posed by AB 1753. We appreciate your time and quick attention to this matter and look forward to continuing to work with you on solutions to the opioid epidemic.

The opioid epidemic in the United States continues to worsen. According to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, 116 people die every day from opioid-related overdoses, and prescription opioid abuse resulted in over \$500 billion in health and social economic costs in 2016. With thousands of Americans dying from opioid misuse and abuse annually, policymakers must use all of the tools in their arsenal to combat the epidemic and save lives. Maximizing available resources for prescribers and pharmacies, like the CURES database, are just some of these tools. CRA and NACDS are supportive of related efforts to combat the opioid epidemic, ranging from educating Californians about the risks associated with opioid misuse, moving toward universal e-prescribing and to ensuring

pharmacies and prescribers are equipped with the best tools to reduce opioid misuse where possible. For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 149 (Cooper).

The California Retailers Association is the only statewide trade association representing all segments of the retail industry including general merchandise, department stores, mass merchandisers, fast food restaurants, convenience stores, supermarkets and grocery stores, chain drug, and specialty retail such as auto, vision, jewelry, hardware and home stores. CRA works on behalf of California's retail industry, which currently operates over 164,200 stores with sales in excess of \$571 billion annually and employing 2,776,000 people—nearly one fifth of California's total employment.

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores advances a pro-patient and pro-pharmacy agenda. For the ultimate benefit of the consumers served by NACDS members, the mission of NACDS is to advance the interests and objectives of the chain community pharmacy industry, by fostering its growth and promoting its role as a provider of healthcare services and consumer products.

For the reasons outlined above, we support AB 149 (Cooper). Please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Snyder with Capitol Advocacy at (916) 444-0400 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Pamela Williams  
Acting President & CEO  
California Retailers Association



Mary Staples  
Director, State Government Affairs  
National Association of Chain Drug Stores

cc: The Honorable Jim Cooper, Author  
Members, Assembly Business & Professions Committee