



September 15, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
1021 O St., Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 317 (Weber) Pharmacist service coverage – Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom:

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) is writing to urge your signature on AB 317 (Weber). This important legislation will help to support patient access to essential healthcare services provided by pharmacists by requiring health care service plans that cover care that is otherwise within pharmacists' scope of practice to reimburse pharmacy providers for delivering those services - and would do so with a negligible fiscal impact on the state.

With 90% of Americans living within 5 miles of a pharmacy, pharmacists are the most accessible health care provider in most communities. According to a recent poll commissioned by NACDS and conducted by Morning Consult, 87% of Californians say it is very or somewhat easy to access pharmacies, ranking their accessibility the highest among healthcare destinations tested. Pharmacies effectively connect millions of patients – including those who do not otherwise have a primary care provider – to important healthcare services.

For almost a decade, the laws in California have enabled pharmacists to offer a growing number of services to help meet the health needs of the communities they serve. Pharmacists are authorized to administer all FDA-approved vaccines for individuals 3 years of age and older, perform CLIA-waived tests, and order and interpret tests for the purpose of monitoring and managing the efficacy and toxicity of drug therapies. Pharmacists can also perform blood glucose, hemoglobin A1c, and cholesterol tests under specified circumstances, initiate and furnish HIV prevention (PrEP and PEP), FDA-approved opioid antagonists to mitigate overdose, and self-administered birth control, nicotine replacement products, and travel medications. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic further cemented public reliance on community pharmacies for these types of vital healthcare services. Most notably, during the 2022-2023 season, pharmacies provided more than two-thirds of all COVID-19 vaccinations, and more than 50% of those shots were administered in underserved areas. Pharmacies have also been essential in delivering testing services to underserved populations, with 70% of pharmacy COVID-19 testing sites located in areas with moderate to severe social vulnerability.

Health plan coverage of the different healthcare services available at pharmacies helps to improve access to cost effective healthcare for patients across California and helps alleviate pressure on the broader healthcare system. Without health plan coverage of pharmacy-based services, out-of-pocket costs may preclude access for those who stand to benefit the most from more convenient healthcare access. Especially for patients who do not otherwise have a primary care provider, community pharmacies are a critical access point for basic healthcare who can help refer more people into primary care, while helping to take care of low-acuity health needs in the interim. Thus, it is imperative that laws be updated to ensure coverage of services provided by pharmacists so that patients do not

face undue financial burdens in accessing this care. For this reason, we are pleased to support AB 317 and urge you to sign the bill into law for the good of all Californians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven C. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Chain Drug Stores

cc: The Honorable Akilah Weber, Author

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NACDS represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate nearly 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ nearly 3 million individuals, including 155,000 pharmacists. They fill over 3 billion prescriptions yearly, and help patients use medicines correctly and safely, while offering innovative services that improve patient health and healthcare affordability. NACDS members also include more than 900 supplier partners and over 70 international members representing 21 countries. Please visit [NACDS.org](http://NACDS.org).