

February 16, 2018

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden,

The Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition (PAPCC) is a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary initiative whose mission is to develop and help enact a federal policy proposal that would enable patient access to, and payment for, Medicare Part B services by state-licensed pharmacists in medically-underserved communities. Membership is comprised of organizations representing patients, pharmacists, and pharmacies, as well as other interested stakeholders.

We write today to express support and gratitude for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic. While we recognize your efforts to address an epidemic that "afflicts individuals regardless of age, socioeconomic status, and geography," these issues are especially acute throughout rural America and medically underserved urban communities. As we have outlined to your committee before, we believe that more fully engaging pharmacists on the health care team presents a unique opportunity to improve outcomes for Medicare patients.

As you know, individuals in underserved areas often struggle to access providers because of their geographic isolation or provider shortages in specific locales. These challenges continue in 2018.

While pharmacists are known for their dispensing prescription medications and helping 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:

- Pharmacists are involved in pain management programs that include medication tapering services and transitioning to non-opioid treatments, work in medication assisted treatment programs and furnish naloxone where authorized. Depending on state authority, pharmacists working under collaborative practice agreements can initiate, monitor, modify, and discontinue medication therapy, including opioids.
- Patients living with chronic conditions often have medications from multiple providers. Pharmacists see the patient's complete medication profile and can help bridge the communication gap between health care providers by coordinating and providing medication-related services. Pharmacists, as part of the health care team, help patients with legitimate pain management needs achieve treatment goals.
- Pharmacists working with other providers, improve care coordination and delivery, resulting in better health outcomes for Medicare patients. As the medication use experts, pharmacists can help 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 this problem in communities across the country, pharmacists can help provide better management and monitoring services to fill the gap in access to care. With 89% of Americans

living within five miles of a community pharmacy, pharmacists are often an accessible but underutilized health care provider

As the medication experts on the patient's health care team, pharmacists play an important role in preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse. Authorizing pharmacist clinical services in the Medicare Part B benefit would expand beneficiaries' access to care including medication and pain management services and treatment.

Scores of your colleagues have cosponsored the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act (S. 109/H.R. 592) that would provide medical underserved beneficiaries with access to Medicare Part B services by pharmacists, consistent with state scope of practice law. We strongly encourage you to consider advancing S. 109/H.R. 592 in your committee.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all Medicare beneficiaries have access to the care they need, specifically through pharmacist-provided care including those that can impact this serious problem that is facing our nation. Should you have any questions, please contact Vince Ventimiglia or David Lee at Leavitt Partners ((202) 774-1404).

Sincerely,

The Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition (www.pharmacistscare.org)