



March 4, 2024

The Honorable Jesse Sumner
Chair, House Labor & Commerce Committee
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 421
Juneau, AK 99801

Representative Sumner:

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 226: Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice. At Fred Meyer we are deeply invested in the well-being of our patients, and we believe this bill represents a crucial step towards safeguarding patient rights and improving access to quality healthcare services.

The synopsis of HB 226, attached for your reference, outlines several key provisions that we find particularly commendable and aligned with our values:

1. **Freedom of Patient Choice:** HB 226 ensures that patients have the freedom to choose their pharmacy without undue influence from Pharmacy Benefits Managers (PBMs). By prohibiting PBMs from directing patients to PBM-affiliated pharmacies, this bill empowers patients to make informed decisions about their healthcare providers.
2. **Ensuring Safe and Efficient Access:** We are particularly supportive of the measures outlined in HB 226 to enhance patient safety and streamline access to clinician-administered drugs. Practices such as "white bagging" and "brown bagging" not only pose potential safety risks but also create unnecessary barriers between patients and their healthcare providers. By barring insurers and PBMs from requiring these practices and authorizing regulatory oversight by the Board of Pharmacy, HB 226 seeks to ensure that patients receive the highest standard of care.
3. **Ending Objectionable PBM Practices:** HB 226 aims to address a range of objectionable PBM practices by bringing them within the purview of the Alaska Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act. By prohibiting practices such as steering patients to PBM-affiliated pharmacies, imposing unequal copayments, and engaging in spread pricing, this bill seeks to promote fairness and transparency in the pharmacy industry.
4. **Fair Reimbursement for Pharmacies:** We applaud HB 226 for its provisions aimed at ensuring fair reimbursement for pharmacies from PBMs. By requiring reimbursement at an objective and transparent standard, such as the national average drug acquisition cost, and providing pharmacies with meaningful appeal procedures, this bill seeks to address the inequities inherent in current reimbursement practices.

In conclusion, we believe that House Bill 226: Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice represents a significant opportunity to advance patient rights, improve healthcare outcomes, and promote fairness in the pharmacy industry. We strongly support this important piece of legislation for the benefit of all Alaskan residents, and encourage all members of the Alaska House of Representatives to do the same.



Thank you for considering our perspective, and please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information or clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KHensley', followed by a horizontal line.

Kayla Hensley, PharmD
Fred Meyer Division Health Leader