



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHAIN DRUG STORES

March 16, 2015

Senator Cathy Giessel
Vice-Chair Senator Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, Alaska

RE: Senate Bill 71-Pharmacists independent immunizations

Dear Senator Giessel,

On behalf of Safeway/Carrs pharmacies, I would like to thank you for sponsoring legislation to allow pharmacists to independently prescribe and administer immunizations in the State of Alaska. We operate 24 licensed pharmacies in Alaska and have found this to be a valuable patient service that we offer in our locations across the country. Prevention of disease in Alaska's citizens is a top priority for our pharmacists.

Initially, pharmacists' vaccination efforts focused on seasonal influenza programs for adults. Today, pharmacists' services have expanded to offer year-round vaccines across the life span. When pharmacists began their immunization activities a few decades ago, many states did not allow pharmacists to immunize. That is no longer the case. As of July 2009, pharmacists in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have the authority to administer vaccines to varying degrees.

However, state-level limitations on a pharmacist's authority to immunize remain, such as restrictions based on the necessity of a collaborative agreement with a physician. Pharmacists in Alaska are currently administering all vaccines under such an agreement except Yellow Fever, which requires a state issued stamp to administer. Pharmacists in Alaska do not currently qualify to apply for this stamp. Alaska is also just one of 14 states that do not allow pharmacy students to immunize under the supervision of a pharmacist. These practices limit the ability of our pharmacists to fully care for patients at the top of their licensure and within their scope of practice.

We urge Alaska to join the growing number of states that are granting independent authority to prescribe and administer vaccines to pharmacists, America's most trusted and accessible health care provider.

- Immunization rates in Alaska are not where we would like them to be. Raising these rates is an urgent public health issue, especially in light of recent disease outbreaks across the country. Removing barriers between providers and patients should be a priority.

- Nationwide, pharmacists have been immunizing since 1994. As of 2013, 230,000 pharmacists and students have completed the APhA training alone. This training prepares pharmacists to make independent recommendations and assess patients' vaccine status. These providers need to be maximized whenever possible. The pharmacy is becoming a more frequent destination to obtain vaccination. More than 20% of patients getting vaccinated now seek vaccinations in pharmacies. Research has found that parents are supportive of pharmacists vaccinating their children and that immunization rates for children increase with pharmacist involvement. (Deshpande M, Schauer J, Mott DA, et al. Parents' perceptions of pharmacists as providers of influenza vaccine to children. J Am Pharm Assoc. 2013;53:488-95.)
- Our pharmacists in Alaska already report vaccines to VacTrAK, a registry where any provider can see which vaccines a patient has received. This would eliminate the necessity of reporting to a collaborative agreement physician.
- Pharmacists are well versed in the emergency medicine treatments required to be on hand for this type of service.

In summary, removing the barriers that prevent pharmacists from independently prescribing and administering vaccines will benefit Alaskan citizens by improving access to critical preventative care and reduce the burden on all providers for treating these diseases.

Sincerely,
Amy Valdez
Amy.valdez@safeway.com
503-657-6348