

Emails of Support for SB 121 and HB 226 *Pharmacies/Pharmacists/Benefit Managers*

As of 02-20-24

From: Dirk White <dirkw@whitesalaska.com>
Date: February 19, 2024 at 6:29:26 PM AKST
To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for SB 121

Dear Senator Giessel,

Please forgive this informal method of informing you of my support of SB 121. I must use this method because we are so busy and to print this on our letterhead will take time away from caring for patient's needs.

Our family of four pharmacists, myself, Trish, our son Soren, and his wife Anna are providing pharmacy services to the communities of Sitka, the surrounding villages and Yakutat. Our 30 plus staff have been working to keep our local citizens healthy and living the best quality of life they can here in SE Alaska.

Our payroll is over one million dollars a year, we provide health insurance to our full-time employees, plus many other benefits. We all know that those expenses are rising every year at the rate of inflation or more in some cases. Meanwhile the pharmacy benefit managers that we must contract with to provide those pharmacy services to our communities have continued to decrease our payment schedules. We must take these contracts without any ability to negotiate a single clause in them. They continue to pay us what they say they do owe us for these services by check rather than electric fund transfers, and now in some instances we are being forced to be paid via a credit card number that they provide and then we must eat the transaction fees. They are producing new shenanigans every day to try to put us out of business.

With this said all our family is in support of SB 121. Thank you to you and your staff for all the work being done to preserve primary access to healthcare across the state at those pharmacies that have been able to weather this storm and keep their doors open!

Sincerely,

Dirk White Pharmacist at Harry Race and Whites Pharmacies in Sitka Alaska.



office: 907-290-2984

fax: 907-966-3979

email:

DirkW@whitesalaska.com

web: www.sitkapharmacies.com

address: 117 Granite Creek Road Ste. 201 Sitka Alaska 99835

From: Roberta Hull <robertaahull@gmail.com>

Date: February 18, 2024 at 2:47:19 PM AKST

To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Cc: "Sen. Matt Claman" <Sen.Matt.Claman@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

I am pleased to offer my support for SB 121 / HB 226 – The Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act. This bill protects patients' right to choose their own pharmacy, guards the patient-pharmacist relationship, and bars unfair trade practices that impact Alaskan pharmacies.

Alaskans should be free to choose their own pharmacy, but pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) take away that choice from our patients. PBMs decide which drugs are covered by insurance, how much is paid to the pharmacy, and which pharmacy the prescription can be filled. Vertically integrated PBMs own mail-order pharmacies – fiscally incentivizing them to gatekeep contracted pharmacies and funnel prescriptions to their own pharmacies

Research has shown that interaction with a pharmacist can increase medication safety and adherence. As one of the most trusted healthcare providers, the services we provide are valuable and our patients lose that if forced to fill at a mail-order pharmacy. It is important that our pharmacies stay in Alaskan communities and that patients have access to pharmacists they have a trusting relationship.

Lastly, the number of independent pharmacies in Alaska has decreased by 25% in less than 6 years. SB 121 / HB 226 offers protection to our local pharmacies by prohibiting PBMs from reimbursing our pharmacies less than what they would reimburse their affiliated pharmacies. Furthermore, this bill requires PBMs to supply contracted pharmacies with a list of current medication prices, as well as prohibiting spread pricing. This price transparency can help lower healthcare costs for patients and employee plan sponsors. The transparency provisions will help to ensure the most affordable and efficacious medications available are provided to patients.

Respectfully,
Roberta Hull, RPh

From: Amy W <amy.wt8@gmail.com>

Date: February 18, 2024 at 2:43:10 PM AKST

To: "Rep. Jesse Sumner" <Rep.Jesse.Sumner@akleg.gov>, "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

January 28, 2024

Senator Cathy Giessel
Senate Majority Leader
Representative Jesse Sumner
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – *the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act*

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

I am pleased to offer our support for SB 121 / HB 226 – *The Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act*. This bill protects patients' right to choose their own pharmacy, guards the patient-pharmacist relationship, and bars unfair trade practices that impact Alaskan pharmacies.

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Respectfully,
Amy

From: Matthew Rafa <matthewrafa@gmail.com>

Date: February 17, 2024 at 5:08:33 PM AKST

To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

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Respectfully,

Matt Rafa

matthewrafa@gmail.com

(304)280-2069

(304)905-9516 (fax)

From: "Bohrer, Mark" <mark.bohrer@fredmeyer.com>

Date: February 17, 2024 at 1:50:35 PM AKST

To: "Sen. Cathy Giessel" <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

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Respectfully,

Mark Bohrer
Fred Meyer
District 7 Pharmacy Coordinator
(907)267-6786

From: Daray Fiasco <darayfiasco@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 2:01 PM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

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Respectfully,

Ethan Nguyen

-----Original Message-----

From: Meredith Dean <meredeadean@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, February 16, 2024 10:16 AM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel <Sen.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov>

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226 – the Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act

Dear Honorable Senator Giessel and Representative Sumner,

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Respectfully,
Meredith Dean

From: **Rod Gordon** <rodsg123@yahoo.com>

Date: Tue, Feb 20, 2024 at 11:16 AM

Subject: Support for SB 121 / HB 226

To: Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov <Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov>, Representative.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov <Representative.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov>

Dear Honorable Senator Wielechowski and Representative Wright,

I am pleased to offer my support for SB 121 / HB 226 – The *Patient Freedom of Pharmacy Choice Act*. This bill protects patients' right to choose their own pharmacy, guards the patient-pharmacist relationship, and bars unfair trade practices that impact Alaskan pharmacies.

Alaskans should be free to choose their own pharmacy, but pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) take away that choice from our patients. PBMs decide which drugs are covered by insurance, how much is paid to the pharmacy, and which pharmacy the prescription can be filled. Vertically integrated PBMs own mail-order pharmacies – fiscally incentivizing them to gatekeep contracted pharmacies and funnel prescriptions to their own pharmacies. This has greatly impacted where Alaskans are “allowed” to fill their prescriptions and has hurt local pharmacies. These practices have resulted in many local pharmacies going out of business, leaving pharmacy deserts around the state, which affects patient safety. Because of Alaska's geographical location, mail-order can be problematic due to the long transit time and inclement weather, leading to medications becoming frozen, inappropriately thawed, and/or otherwise unsafe for use. Nothing in this legislation prohibits patients from using mail-order if they prefer to do so.

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Respectfully,

Rod S Gordon, R.Ph.
Staff Pharmacist, SCF-RASU Pharmacy,
Southcentral Foundation/Alaska Native Medical Center

Addendum: Personal Experience-

I was forced to look for new employment as a 65 yr old pharmacist in August, 2020, when the pharmacy I was working for at the time [Great Land Infusion Pharmacy, an independently owned local pharmacy in Anchorage, that provided both specialty home infusion services to patients residing in Anchorage and specialty retail pharmacy services to approximately 250 patients living with HIV and numerous other patients with serious life threatening conditions like Hepatitis C infection across the state] was forced to terminate operations due to declining insurance reimbursements.

The issues that this bill attempts to address were directly responsible for the end of that business which had efficiently and effectively provided highly accredited pharmacy services to the local population of Anchorage and across the state

for almost 15 years before it was forced to close. The loss of continuity of care and needless transition of services to specialty pharmacies out of state and to other large chain store pharmacies within the state lead to a disruption in care and a loss of control by patients to choose where to continue to receive these crucial services.

Great Land Infusion Pharmacy was staffed by pharmacists who were credentialed through the American Academy of HIV Medicine as pharmacist specialists in the management of HIV infection. We provided services to all patients in Alaska with HIV that were covered by the AK State AIDS Drug Assistance Program as well as many other patients who received services from local infectious disease providers as well as the services provided by the FQHC, Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center.

I can attest that the loss of personalized care for these very needy patients is still felt, as evidenced by the contact that I still have with many local medical providers who continue to manage these patients today.

The continued needless loss of local independent pharmacy businesses is a very unfortunate consequence of the very complex and stilted reimbursement structure associated with pharmacy services today, and this legislation, if adopted and passed into current law, would go a long way to begin to correct the inequities in the pharmacy market place that have lead us to this unfortunate end.

I sincerely hope you will give this matter your focused attention and when the bill is brought to the floor of the house or the senate, make the decision to stand with the local pharmacies of Alaska, and do what you can to correct this reimbursement imbalance orchestrated by the PBMs of America.

Very respectfully,

Rod S Gordon

Rod Gordon, R.Ph. AAHIVP
5684 Alora Loop
Anchorage, AK 99504
340-513-4703
rodsq123@yahoo.com