



February 13, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky  
Chair, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Support: SB 440 Pharmacists – Aids for the Cessation of Tobacco Product Use**

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

Promoting and supporting smoking cessation programs is an important priority for policy makers, healthcare professionals, academics, and government officials. On behalf of the leadership from the schools of pharmacy, we urge your support for SB 440 Pharmacists – Aids for the Cessation of Tobacco Product Use. This bill would authorize a pharmacist, who meets specified requirements, to prescribe and dispense medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as an aid for the cessation of tobacco products.

Lung cancer is still the leading cause of cancer death in the United States - with only an 18.6 percent five-year survival rate<sup>1</sup>. Prevention of cigarette smoking and help for those wishing to quit can yield enormous health benefits for populations and individuals. Clearly, more effort remains to be done to reduce the morbidity and mortality of this disease. Likewise, asthma is a serious health issue for our nation and state. Asthma associated from secondhand smoke costs the health system \$80 billion annually and is responsible for 1.7 million emergency department visits and more than 1.5 million outpatient hospital visits annually. **Pharmacists can play a much wider role in reducing the prevalence of smoking and aid in the reduction of lung cancer, asthma, and respiratory illnesses.**

Three decades ago, US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD stated that, "Encouraging smoking cessation is one of the most effective and cost effective things that doctors and other health professionals can do to improve health and prolong their patients' lives."<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the role of the pharmacists in smoking cessation efforts, the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) created a toolbox with resources specifically designed for pharmacists to use with patients seeking information on smoking cessation.

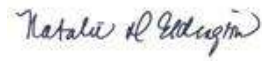
In 2017, to spur adoption of CDC policy, CMS's Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) issued an Informational Bulletin encouraging states to expand the scope of pharmacy practice as a way of fostering immediate access to certain drugs. Although CMCS noted these practices are optional for states, they stressed [pharmacy scope of practice expansion] can "facilitate easier access to medically necessary and time-sensitive drugs for Medicaid beneficiaries."<sup>3</sup> In the bulletin, CMCS specifically cited tobacco cessation products.

Smoking cessation medications, including nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) and non-nicotine replacement therapies (NNRTs), have been shown to increase tobacco abstinence rates. These medications are currently indicated for smoking cessation, and pharmacists are well educated to select the appropriate medication therapies and subsequently monitoring for therapeutic efficacy and adverse events.

Pharmacists are well positioned within the community to help patients initiate attempts to quit smoking or complement the cessation efforts initiated by other providers. Stopping smoking has substantial immediate and long-term health benefits for smokers of all ages. Currently 12 states have similar statutes or regulations for pharmacist to prescribe and dispense smoking cessation aids.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We urge a favorable outcome.

Sincerely,



Natalie D. Eddington, PhD, FAAPS, FCP  
Dean and Professor  
Univ of Maryland School of Pharmacy



Anne Lin, PharmD, FNAP  
Dean and Professor  
Notre Dame of Maryland University



Rondall E. Allen, BS, PharmD  
Dean and Professor  
Univ of Maryland Eastern Shore

cc: The Honorable Antonio Hayes

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<sup>1</sup> American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). Survivor Rates. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.net/survivorship> Jan 2020

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Reducing the Health Consequences of Smoking: 25 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville (MD): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 1982

<sup>3</sup> US Preventative Service Task Force. Recommendations for Primary Care Practice. 2017; <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Name/recommendations/>.

<sup>3</sup> CMS Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services. (2017, January 17). *CMCS Informational Bulletin*. Retrieved from <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib011717.pdf>