



**2022 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 62 – Pharmacists – Aids for the Cessation of Tobacco Product Use
COMMITTEE: House – Health and Governmental Operations Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 62 would authorize pharmacists who meet the requirements of regulations adopted by the State Board of Pharmacy to prescribe and dispense nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as aids for the cessation of the use of tobacco products.

POSITION RATIONALE: According to the most recent data from the CDC Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS,) 10.9% (513,700) of adult Marylanders currently use tobacco products. Two-thirds reported a quit attempt in 2017, however only about one-third utilized effective smoking cessation therapies to do so (Walton, 2019; Babb, 2017). Quit rates in Maryland remain low overall, with estimates ranging from 6-10% of smokers ultimately successfully quitting (Babb, 2017).

Significance of the Problem

- Long-term tobacco use increases risk of cancer of the lung, liver, colon and rectum, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and cardiovascular events (HHS, 2014).
- In Maryland, smoking causes more deaths than homicide, suicide, HIV/AIDS, drug-overdose, and accidents combined, making it the number one cause of preventable morbidity and mortality in the state. (Maryland Dept. of Health, 2021).
- Smoking results in an estimated \$2.71 billion in medical costs to the state annually (Maryland Dept. of Health, 2020).

Current Access to Smoking Cessation

- Smokers can buy nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products over the counter at a pharmacy but without a prescription, the products are expensive (\$80-120 per month).
- Smokers can schedule an appointment with their medical provider and ask for help. Physicians and advanced practice providers can prescribe NRT, but smokers must go to their pharmacy to fill them.
- Quit Lines are available throughout the state 24 hours a day seven days per week.

Impact

- The consumer experience is an important consideration when creating health interventions. When a smoker makes the difficult decision to quit, resources should be available and applied immediately.
- Some smokers are embarrassed to talk to their health care provider about their smoking.
- Convenience and access to support may improve results.
- Prescriptions lower or eliminate OTC costs for NRT.
- Pharmacist providing smoking cessation counseling and prescribing medications has been shown to be effective and improve access to medicines (Anderson, 2019; Carson-Chahoud, 2019; O’Reilly, 2019).

Role of the Pharmacist

Recognizing many primary care providers are unable to integrate a full tobacco cessation intervention program into routine practice, and that the uninsured or underinsured often lack access to primary care providers, patients should be able to seek out free consultations from their pharmacists. Pharmacists could play a unique role in tobacco cessation efforts, due to the quality and quantity of the knowledge about prescription medication and their

possible interactions with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT; nicotine patches, gum, etc.). This is already happening in 14 other states. Cessation therapy medications should not be more difficult to obtain than smoking and vaping products.

Prevention

- Currently discourage the use of tobacco products through no-smoking signs and refusal to sell tobacco products at pharmacies.
- Pharmacists ask patients who are prescribed cardiovascular and psychotropic medications or birth control, if they are using tobacco products that may cause interactions (e.g., increased risk of blood clots).

Intervention

- Provide resources for patients who are willing to quit.
- Instruct patients who decide to use prescription or OTC NRT how to use them properly.
- Most pharmacies keep NRT products behind the counter or within a locked case. Increase promotion of these products within the pharmacy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of support for SB 62. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

References

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