



American Lung Association Testimony Senate Bill 62
Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
February 1, 2022
Support

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagen and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 62, Pharmacists – Aids for Cessation of Tobacco Product Use sponsored by Senator Washington. The American Lung Association strongly supports this bill as an integral way to address tobacco use and support smokers who want to quit.

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases.

The American Lung Association is committed to making it as easy as possible for smokers to get evidence-based assistance to help them quit and end their addiction to nicotine. Seven in ten smokers want to quit but only one in ten quit successfully in a year. Increasing access to FDA-approved quit smoking medications will allow more smokers to successfully quit. The American Lung Association supports improving access to tobacco cessation treatment through integrating pharmacists into the healthcare team.

Unfortunately, there are many barriers to accessing FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications. One key barrier is a prescription, which is required for four treatments: NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy) inhaler, NRT nasal spray, bupropion and varenicline. Most other FDA-approved treatments are currently available over the counter. With a prescription however the treatments are covered without cost-sharing for most Americans.

Many smokers purchase their quit smoking treatments from a pharmacy. Cost can be a significant deterrent for patients obtaining their medication. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a bulletin in January 2017 that allows for the expansion of the prescribing authority for pharmacists and permit standing orders for Medicaid enrollees effectively increasing access to treatment for these patients. Allowing trained pharmacists to prescribe the seven FDA-approved cessation medications will increase access to low-or no-cost treatments for all patients seeking to make a quit attempt. We also recognize that these policies must have key safeguards in place to balance patient protections and encourage them to be included in the final regulations. These safeguards include, required trainings and policies

to triage patients that have counter indications for medications. The American Lung Association supports unrestricted access to a comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit for all tobacco users. A comprehensive benefit includes all medication and types of counseling recommended by the U.S. Public Health Service.

The American Lung Association thanks the Maryland General Assembly for their continued commitment to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Maryland. The American Lung Association strongly supports Senate Bill 62 which would allow pharmacists to support smokers who want to quit by allowing them to prescribe FDA approved medications and believes this expanded access will allow more smokers to successfully quit and encourages swift action to move the bill out of committee and passage by the General Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aleks Casper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aleks Casper
Director of Advocacy, Maryland
202-719-2810
aleks.casper@lung.org