

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D  
Legislative District 43  
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 102  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3145 · 301-858-3145  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3145  
Mary.Washington@senate.state.md.us

SB 62 – PHARMACISTS – AID FOR CESSATION OF TOBACCO PRODUCT USE

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MARY WASHINGTON

March 24, 2022

Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

**SB 62**, as written, was passed unanimously on the Senate floor in 2020 (SB 440). It was referred to the HGO Committee on March 17, 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this bill did not get a hearing in HGO.

According to the CDC, Maryland spent \$2.7 billion in 2009 to manage the healthcare costs of smokers. Each year, we spend billions treating individuals for preventable diseases related to smoking. Passage of SB 62 could substantially decrease this annual tax dollar expenditure.

Research shows that smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and around the world. Research also shows that most smokers want to quit. With SB 62, Maryland would take a step toward helping them. With this bill, we would save lives.

Currently, Maryland law covers tobacco cessation medication and services offered by licensed health care practitioners, SB 62 would simply extend those same provisions to licensed pharmacists in Maryland and grant them the right to prescribe and dispense medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as tobacco cessation aids.

Though there are over-the-counter options for nicotine replacement therapies available for purchase, insurance companies do not cover these, and financial barriers can often prohibit some patients from purchasing these products. A two-week supply of nicotine patches can cost \$30 to \$45, while a pack of cigarettes averages about \$7. If someone is addicted to nicotine, and cannot afford to purchase over-the-counter products, they are going to purchase a \$7 pack of cigarettes instead. SB 62 would allow most patients to

get nicotine replacement therapies with a \$0 dollar co-pay. The goal here is to make it as easy as possible to get nicotine replacement therapies into the hands of smokers with as few barriers as possible.

Authorizing pharmacists to provide tobacco cessation aids is safe, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has stated that use of cessation medications is appropriate for most adult smokers. In fact, there are 14 states that have passed legislation so far that have statutes or regulations addressing pharmacist prescribing of tobacco cessation aids (without a collaborative practice agreement or local standing order): Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and West Virginia. Other states are also in the process of considering similar legislation.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 62.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being the most prominent.

Senator Mary Washington  
Maryland 43<sup>rd</sup> District