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MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
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HB 1232

March 15 2023

TO: Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 1232 – Health Occupations – Pharmacists – Administration of Vaccines
POSITION: **Support**

Chair Peña-Melynk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1232.

HB 1232 allows pharmacists to vaccinate children between the ages of 3 and 18 with recommended immunizations, continuing the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announcement early on in the pandemic that pharmacists in all 50 states were able to administer the full schedule of immunizations for children of these ages. It is good because pharmacists working in the outpatient setting are in an excellent position to improve pediatric vaccination rates by administering vaccines.¹ The DHHS announcement was due to the declining rates of childhood immunization rates across the country during the pandemic. As more than 90% of the U.S. population lives within two miles of a community pharmacy, pharmacies present an accessible option to improve childhood vaccination rates.¹

Pharmacists are in a great position to augment services that are offered through private doctor's offices, pediatric practices, or health department clinics – they offer convenient locations, extended hours, and for some community pharmacies, no need for appointments. Parents have struggled since the pandemic to get their children immunized and ready for school, with the overall number of vaccine doses administered to children ages 0-18 years down 56% in April 2020 compared to April 2019.² Pharmacies present as an excellent partner to enhance available services and help to prevent serious childhood diseases. We should be removing barriers to vaccination and providing all the opportunities we can. Our statewide immunization registry, ImmuNET, is accessible by pharmacies (and has been used for COVID-19 vaccination all through the pandemic) and will provide the necessary information to doctor's offices and health department clinics on vaccination history.

As our colleagues at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy relayed in a 2020 article: "...now more than ever pharmacists are important partners with families and our communities to keep our kids healthy."³ Allowing pharmacists to administer immunizations to children between the ages of 3 and 18 years will improve pediatric vaccination rates and make our communities healthier.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on **HB 12332**.

¹ "Implementation of pharmacist-administered pediatric vaccines in the United States: major barriers and potential solutions for the outpatient setting," *Pharmacy Practice*, v.17 (2) Apr-June 2019 PmC6594428

² "Maryland Department of Health encourages parents to bring children's vaccinations up-to-date amid COVID-19 pandemic," May 20, 2020

³ "Pharmacists: A New Partner in Childhood Immunizations," *The Elm*, University of Maryland, October 28, 2020.

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