



September 18, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O St., Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 317 (Weber) Pharmacist service coverage – Request for Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

The California Community Pharmacy Coalition (CCPC) urges your signature on AB 317 (Weber), which will help ensure pharmacists receive appropriate reimbursement for services provided to patients with a negligible fiscal impact on the state.

AB 317 requires a health care service plan that offers coverage for a service that is within the scope of practice of a duly licensed pharmacist to pay or reimburse the cost of services performed by a pharmacist at an in-network pharmacy or by a pharmacist at an out-of-network pharmacy if the health care service plan or insurer has an out-of-network pharmacy benefit. This is necessary now more than ever, as pharmacies have become one of the most accessible health care providers for Californians.

Nearly 90% of the California population lives within five miles of a pharmacy and millions of Californians benefit from receiving testing, vaccines, and treatment from community pharmacies in addition to their critical medications. COVID-19 has further brought to light the important role pharmacists play as health care providers. Many Californians face expensive emergency room visits or long wait times to receive services that a pharmacist can safely provide within their scope of practice, and this is exacerbated by lack of adequate reimbursement from health plans for pharmacy services.

For almost a decade, statutory and regulatory advances have been made in California, recognizing the role pharmacists play as healthcare providers. Pharmacists can administer all FDA-approved vaccines for individuals 3 years of age and older, perform CLIA-waived tests, and order and interpret tests for the purpose of monitoring and managing the efficacy and toxicity of drug therapies. Pharmacists can also perform blood glucose, hemoglobin A1c, or cholesterol tests under specified circumstances, initiate and furnish HIV PrEP and PEP, FDA-approved opioid antagonists, and self-administered birth control, nicotine replacement products, and travel medications.

Pharmacists received reimbursement for COVID-19 vaccinations during the Pandemic due to federal and state funding. Now that the state of emergency has ended, pharmacists are again being denied payment even though they continue to provide crucial vaccinations to decrease the severity of COVID. Given the fact that for many patients, community pharmacies are their primary access point for health care and their local pharmacists the most accessible provider available to them in their community, it is imperative that pharmacists receive reimbursement from health plans for critical care that is within their scope of practice. For this reason, we are pleased to support AB 317.

The California Community Pharmacy Coalition is a project of the California Retailers Association and was formed to promote the positive impacts community pharmacies have within California's healthcare system by working on legislation and regulations that will expand access opportunities for community pharmacy services including in hard to reach, under-served areas where Californians often have very limited options for healthcare.

We urge you to sign the bill into law for the good of all Californians and access to patient care.

Sincerely,

Rachel Michelin
President & CEO
California Retailers Association

Cc: The Honorable Akilah Weber, Author