

Message from the Pharmacy Student Forum Executive Committee – October 2009



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Chair, Policy and Legislative Affairs Advisory Group

Greetings students of ASHP! I hope this message finds you well as you continue on your journey toward becoming a pharmacist. What an exciting time to be a healthcare professional, especially a future pharmacist! As the details of the healthcare reform bills are ironed out this fall, pharmacists and pharmacy students have the unique opportunity to shape the roll of pharmacists in the future. We are able to carve our place in a new healthcare system, work as vital members of integrated healthcare teams, and serve as part of the answer to many of the problems facing healthcare today. I would like to share with you my recent experience of pharmacy warriors in action, advocating for increased recognition for the important work of pharmacists in health systems.

As ASHP's Policy Week comes to a close each year, pharmacy advocates gather in Washington, D.C. for Legislative Day. As the healthcare system in the U.S. faces the largest changes since the advent of Medicare, this year may have been one of the most important Legislative Days in history! This past Legislative Day, I had the privilege of joining pharmacists from around the country in conversations with legislators regarding issues in the healthcare reform bills that are of special interest to pharmacists. Through the collaboration of ASHP members from each state, and coordination by the ASHP Government Affairs staff, meetings were arranged to allow pharmacist and student constituents to meet with their state senators and the congressmen from their districts.

The key issues discussed on Capitol Hill are of particular interest to the next generation of pharmacist clinicians. The issues included loan forgiveness for pharmacists serving as frontline providers in underserved areas, restoration of funding for post-graduate year two (PGY-2) residency programs, and recognition of pharmacists as providers under Medicare Part B. ASHP urged congress to ensure that medication services by pharmacists remain in both the House and Senate versions of health care reform legislation, and to include pharmacists as non-physician providers under Part B. Additionally, members asked for support of ASHP draft legislation as an amendment to the health reform bill that would restore the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) funding of these critical programs. ASHP members also advocated for the language that includes pharmacists as frontline providers who are eligible for loan forgiveness to remain in the House bill and to be incorporated in the Senate bill.

I encourage you to also act as a pharmacy warrior and an advocate for your profession! Contact your senator or representative. You can find your congressman on the ASHP grassroots advocacy webpage. Visit <http://www.ashp.org/advocacy>. You can also get connected with other student advocates by logging on to the ASHP Connect discussion board. Visit <http://www.ashp.org/connect>.

Regards,

Rachel Kruer

Chair, Policy and Legislative Affairs Advisory Group

p.s. On behalf of the Policy & Legislative Affairs Advisory Group, thank you to all who participated in our grassroots advocacy letter writing campaign last month. ASHP student members sent over 300 letters to our state legislators regarding the restoration of funding for PGY-2 residency funding!