



April 11, 2018

The Honorable Michael Burgess, Chairman
The Honorable Gene Green, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Energy and Commerce Committee
Health Subcommittee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Burgess and Ranking Member Green,

ASHP (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists) respectfully requests that H.R. 592, the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act, be included in legislation being developed by the subcommittee to address the current opioid abuse crisis. ASHP represents pharmacists who serve as patient care providers in acute and ambulatory settings. The organization's 45,000 members include pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians. For more than 75 years, ASHP has been at the forefront of efforts to improve medication use and enhance patient safety.

ASHP shares the committee's commitment to combating the nation's opioid overdose and misuse epidemic. We believe that pharmacists, as the medication experts on the interprofessional healthcare team, play an essential role in opioid and substance misuse prevention, education, and assistance. ASHP has long prioritized efforts to address this public health crisis, engaging at the state level to strengthen prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) and at the federal level to increase funding for treatment and prevention initiatives.

Currently, pharmacists' services are not covered under Medicare Part B. As a result, beneficiaries' access to the healthcare practitioner with the most medication-related education and training is limited, and is restricted mainly to services related to the dispensing of medications. By not including pharmacists among other Part B providers whose services are covered, patients are not receiving the benefits of a coordinated, team-based approach to care.

For patients living with chronic conditions, the sheer number of medications creates situations where misuse or abuse is a real possibility. Because pharmacists see the patient's complete medication profile on a regular basis, they can be the bridge between healthcare providers by coordinating and providing medication-related services.

Pharmacists can help fight the opioid epidemic by managing and optimizing the impact of medications, reviewing medications to tailor care plans to patient needs, providing recommendations for non-opioid pain management alternatives, and educating patients regarding opioids. This can be accomplished by recognizing the value pharmacists offer as members of the healthcare team and utilizing them at the top of their training in fighting the opioid crisis. This recognition is especially important in underserved communities specifically addressed in this legislation.

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Again, ASHP thanks the subcommittee for its work on this public health crisis. As the subcommittee continues its work, we encourage you to view ASHP as a resource on this critical issue. Please contact me with any questions, or have a member of your team contact Christopher Topoleski, Director of Federal Legislative Affairs, at 301-664-8806 or at ctopoleski@ashp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kasey K. Thompson', written over a horizontal line.

Kasey K. Thompson, Pharm.D., M.S., M.B.A.
Chief Operating Officer & Senior Vice President