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Contact: Rob Ehrich 202.312.7457/Rob.Ehrich@FaegreBD.com

Coalition Applauds Introduction of Legislation to Increase Patient Access to Pharmacist Services, Within State Scope of Practice, in Medically Underserved Communities

WASHINGTON (March 11, 2014) – The Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (PAPCC) – a group of more than 20 organizations representing patients, pharmacists, and pharmacies, as well as other interested stakeholders – issued the following statement today on the introduction of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to recognize pharmacists and their patient care services under Medicare Part B:

“The Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (PAPCC) applauds Representatives Brett Guthrie (R-KY), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), and Todd Young (R-IN), for introducing H.R. 4190, a bill that will enable patient access to, and payment for, Medicare Part B services by state-licensed pharmacists in medically underserved communities,” said Vince Ventimiglia, a Principal with FaegreBD Consulting and advisor to the PAPCC.

“The shortage of health care workers is a major limitation on access to care in medically underserved communities. This legislation seeks to fill critical needs and increase access to quality health care in medically underserved communities by enabling pharmacists to practice to the full extent of their education, training and license,” Ventimiglia added.

“While pharmacists remain committed to assisting patients with access and information related to their prescription medications, pharmacists today are capable of providing a broad spectrum of services including health and wellness screenings, chronic disease management, immunizations, and medication management, to help meet the growing need of patients in an evolving health care delivery environment designed to advance wellness and reduce hospital readmissions,” Ventimiglia said.

“The PAPCC is encouraged by this significant step forward to increasing patient access to health care in a cost-effective manner by making pharmacists, as key members of the patient care team, eligible for payment under Medicare Part B, and we look forward to working with our champions and others in Congress to enact this common-sense legislation into law,” Ventimiglia said.

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Editor's note:

The following are additional quotes from national PAPCC members:

1. "ASHP looks forward to working with members of Congress and other stakeholders in enacting legislation that will recognize pharmacists in all care settings, including hospitals, health systems and clinics, to provide these services to this critical patient population," said American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) CEO Paul W. Abramowitz, Pharm.D., Sc.D. (Hon.), FASHP.
2. "Community pharmacy can play an important role in helping to prevent and treat acute and chronic conditions. With new patients entering the system, a primary care physician shortage, an aging population and a growing prevalence of chronic diseases, there is a great need for convenient access to quality health care services," said Kermit Crawford, Walgreens president of pharmacy, health and wellness. "Walgreens is uniquely positioned to help meet the many health care needs of patients in medically underserved communities. Of Walgreens more than 8,000 points of care, two-thirds of the pharmacies serve medically underserved communities and have highly-trained pharmacists available to administer immunizations, provide health testing and to help advise patients managing chronic conditions."
3. "We have a 'medication use' crisis in this country!," said Thomas E. Menighan, BSPharm, MBA, ScD (Hon), FAPhA, Executive Vice President and CEO, American Pharmacists Association. "Our health care system spends billions of dollars fixing problems from suboptimal drug therapy. Pharmacists can help, and so the profession has united to gain the recognition that gets us on the team and in the game through the formation of PAPCC. APhA applauds all the pharmacy organizations and stakeholders who are united and focused on passage of federal legislation that gives our patients that access. If we are successful, everyone wins, including patients, team-based health care and payers."
4. "Independent community pharmacies often care for underserved patients in rural and urban areas alike," said National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) CEO B. Douglas Hoey, RPh, MBA. "Most of these providers are located in smaller communities and approximately 1,800 independents are the only pharmacy option in their rural communities. In other areas, independent pharmacies cater to diverse populations for whom English may be a second language. In these scenarios and others, independent community pharmacists are ideally positioned to play a greater role in health care so NCPA is proud to support this legislation."
5. "Patients' access to pharmacists' provided patient care is critical to ensuring optimal health outcomes and efficient health care delivery," said Rebecca Snead, BSPharm, Executive Vice President and CEO, National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA). "State pharmacy associations, through NASPA, proudly stand beside those united to advance federal legislation that will give some of the most vulnerable populations in the United States increased access to important patient care services."

6. “Retail pharmacies are oftentimes the most readily accessible healthcare provider. Research has shown that nearly all Americans (89%) live within five miles of a community retail pharmacy,” said National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) President and CEO Steven C. Anderson, IOM, CAE. “Combined with their expertise and training, pharmacists as healthcare providers can serve their patients to their full capabilities.”
7. "Benefits of medications are often negated because of adverse events and poor adherence," said Jeffrey Delafuente, M.S., FCCP, FASCP, President of the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP). "Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to provide medication management services and work with patients and prescribers to improve medication use and safety. Older adults are particularly vulnerable to medication side effects and adherence issues because of the vast number of medications prescribed. ASCP looks forward to working collaboratively with Congress and other stakeholders to help resolve today's rampant medication-related problems."
8. “America’s supermarkets have a long history of promoting healthy lifestyles within diverse communities across the U.S.,” said Food Marketing Institute Vice President of Health & Wellness, Catherine Polley, RPh. “Food retailers offer a broad range of wellness services and programs, including the opportunity to merge medication adherence with nutrition counseling.”