



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 13, 2020

Senate Bill 440: Pharmacists – Aids for the Cessation of Tobacco Product Use

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senators Hayes, Benson, Ellis, Kramer, Patterson, and Washington, Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 440: Pharmacists – Aids for the Cessation of Tobacco Product Use.

This legislation would authorize a pharmacist who meets the requirements of certain regulations to prescribe and dispense aids for the cessation of the use of tobacco products; requiring the State Board of Pharmacy, by September 1, 2021, to adopt certain regulations; requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Program to provide coverage for certain services rendered by a licensed pharmacist under the Act to the same extent as certain services rendered by any other licensed health care practitioner; etc.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that "many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitation, and economic development infrastructure." (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org), an extensive assessment of Maryland's rural health needs, illustrates the increase prevalence of adult and youth smoking across our 18 rural jurisdictions. MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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