



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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Finance Committee

March 21, 2023

SB 940: Pharmacies - Prescription Drugs - Accessible Labels for Blind, Visually Impaired, and Print Disabled Individuals

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. SB 940 is critical to ensure Marylanders who are blind, have low vision, those with reading and print disabilities, and older adults can access prescription medication fully and independently.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Requires pharmacies to inform customers about the availability of accessible label options.
- Requires a pharmacy to provide an accessible prescription label at no cost and within a reasonable timeframe.
- Establishes standards for label accessibility and prescription readers.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Increases independence.** Independent living is a fundamental right but, for many Marylanders, the ability to access medical prescriptions independently is limited due to inaccessible, one-size-fits-all labelling. The inability to access prescription labels can result in taking the wrong type or amount medication, taking medication at the wrong time, consuming expired medication, or not being able to catch pharmacy errors.
- **It aligns with best practices.** The U.S. Access Board already set requirements for accessible prescription drug container labels.
- **Helps Maryland come into compliance with federal regulations for accessibility of prescription labels.** The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act already require pharmacies to provide effective communication of medical information to blind or low-vision customers.
- Prescription drug labels are a legal document and are already regulated by state and federal laws.

Amendments

The Council supports the amendments passed by the House of Delegates. These include placing this bill under the scope of the Maryland State Board of Pharmacy and requiring the Board to develop the regulations. These amendments align with input from advocates and business associations.

People with visual disabilities need and want equal access to prescription labels. The ability to have functionally equivalent access to medical information is essential to supporting independent living for all people with disabilities. For these reasons, the Council supports SB 940 with amendments.

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