



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 1, 2024

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 76 - Health Occupations - Pharmacists - Administration of Vaccines**

**Summary:** HB 76 updates and makes permanent the current practice implemented since August of 2020 in Maryland pharmacies of allowing pharmacists to administer routine vaccinations to children ages 3 to 17 by increasing the minimum age to 5.

**Overview:** During the Coronavirus pandemic, the federal government passed addendums to the [Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness \(PREP\) Act](#) that, among other things, allowed licensed, trained pharmacists to administer FDA-approved vaccinations that follow the CDC's schedule of vaccines to children ages 3-17.

For three years now, Marylanders have been able to bring their children to their pharmacist for routine childhood vaccinations. This provision of the PREP Act is set to expire at the end of this year on December 31, 2024, however—HB 76 merely makes this change permanent, as **43** other states have already done.

Many of these pharmacies are located with high social vulnerability—according to a report by the Government Accountability Office, [half of all pharmacies that partnered with them on COVID-19 vaccines were located in areas with high social vulnerability](#); these pharmacies were able to deliver critical vaccines to these vulnerable populations to ensure they were protected from not only COVID-19, but other childhood illnesses that the schedule of [CDC schedule of vaccines](#) protects against.

Furthermore, many rural counties have [low numbers of family physicians](#) that can be difficult to access depending on the distance and each individual's access to public transportation. In many areas, pharmacies are more easily accessible—[nearly 90% of the entire US population lives within 2 miles of a community pharmacy](#).

Our constituents have now come to depend on this accessibility—and we are one of only **7** states who has not yet made this change permanent. Furthermore, according to a recent Morning Consult Poll, 85% of Marylanders support allowing pharmacists to provide routine vaccinations.

HB 76 merely codifies this practice so that they can continue to have access to that care, which is set to expire in at the end of December with the ending of several pandemic revisions to the PREP Act.

Under this bill, pharmacists can only administer vaccines if they have completed at least 20 hours of training that includes treatment and recognition of adverse reactions to vaccines and hands-on injection techniques. They also must be certified in CPR.

Pharmacists will be required to upload information about the vaccine to ImmuNet, [Maryland's HIPAA-compliant vaccine database](#), that other medical professionals interacting with the patient will be able to see.

The bill further protects the relationship between child patients and pediatricians by requiring pharmacists to speak with the child and their accompanying caretaker about the importance of well child visits and requiring them to refer them to a primary care physician if the child does not already have one.

According to 2022 data, only [48.5% of Maryland children have a medical home](#)—meaning they not only miss these vaccines, but also the discussion about why they need to take their child for well visits.

A [report released by the Maryland Department of Health](#) outlines the Administration's support for the permanent codification of pharmacists' authority to administer vaccine to children:

“Given the overall benefit of illness prevention, the documentation that vaccinations are one of the most effective public health tools available, the recognition that lack of easy access to preventive services like vaccinations increases health inequities, and the demonstration that Maryland pharmacists can effectively vaccinate children, MDH strongly recommends making permanent the authority for pharmacists to order and administer CDC recommended vaccinations to children ages 3-18. MDH recognizes the importance of a medical home for all children, and recommends that any extension of this authority ensures that pharmacists inform parents of the need for routine well child care through the primary care provider or medical home.”

HB 76 will allow pharmacies to partner with primary care pediatricians so that parents get both crucial immunizations and are referred to a primary care provider who can continue their child's medical care.

**Conclusion:** HB 76 merely continues a practice that our residents have already come to depend on by permanently allowing pharmacists to provide FDA-approved vaccines to children ages 5 to 17, ensuring that we can continue to protect our youngest residents from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Thank you and I ask for a favorable report on HB 76.