



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHAIN DRUG STORES



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION
OF CHAIN DRUG STORES

NACDS and MACDS Testimony to the Maryland General Assembly House Health and Government Operations Committee

Thursday, February 1, 2024

Support HB 76 – Pharmacist Administration of Vaccines

Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 76. Delegate Lopez, thank you for sponsoring this important bill restoring access to many childhood vaccines at neighborhood pharmacies. Especially for the 51.5% of Maryland children who do not have an established medical home, this bill will help fill gaps in care and improve access to vital vaccine services.ⁱ

When the federal government acted under the PREP Act in 2020 to temporarily authorize pharmacists in every state to administer flu, COVID and other ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) recommended vaccines to children aged 3-17 years old, this action remedied the regional disparities that once prevented Maryland families from receiving the same access to childhood vaccine services that families in other states could seek out at pharmacies. Because some of the original, temporary federal vaccine allowances for pharmacists have expired, Maryland families are again limited in what types of vaccines their children can receive at a pharmacy.

Consistent with the recommendations of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) study on pharmacist administration of children’s vaccines,ⁱⁱ HB 76 restores Maryland pharmacists’ ability to order and administer all ACIP recommended vaccines to children 5 years and older, thereby improving the accessibility of vaccine services for the many children in Maryland who do not have an establish medical home or who otherwise face obstacles in seeking vaccine services from a pediatrician or other primary care provider. In doing so, the bill also leverages pharmacists to educate families about the importance of a well child visit with a pediatric care provider - which as the MDH study notes, helps to encourage parents of children who do not currently have a medical home or who may be delayed in seeking this care to schedule such an appointment. Moreover, because pharmacies would be required to report administered childhood vaccines to patients’ primary care provider (where one exists), physicians can use this information to identify and encourage children who may be late in scheduling annual wellness visits to do so.

Pharmacists are highly experienced and qualified vaccine providers who have been safely administering vaccines to Marylanders for the last 20 years, and to children specifically since 2011 when the law was first changed to improve families’ access to the seasonal flu vaccine. Since 2020, Maryland pharmacies have provided 192,028 flu, COVID and routine childhood vaccines to children ages 16 and younger in the state – compared to 16,262 vaccines administered to children in 2019.ⁱⁱⁱ As evidenced by the increased number of childhood vaccines at neighborhood pharmacies (more than a 1,000% increase in demand), many Maryland parents have welcomed this option. In fact, 84% of Marylanders believe it’s important for state lawmakers to update policies to ensure that patients permanently have the same access to pharmacy vaccination (among other services) that were available during the COVID-19 pandemic.^{iv}

With 90 percent of Americans living within 5 miles of a pharmacy, and 86 percent of adults in Maryland saying pharmacists are easy to access^v, restoring access to the full portfolio of childhood pharmacy vaccines in pharmacy settings will help to ensure Maryland’s families have vaccine access options that work best for their own families. Especially considering the broader public health benefits of vaccinations, making it easier for parents to access vaccines for their children will help to support healthier communities across the state – a goal that we all share. **For all of these reasons, NACDS and its members urge Maryland lawmakers to advance HB 76.**

ⁱ <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/children-with-a-medical-home/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

ⁱⁱ Health Occupations - Pharmacists - Administration of Children’s Vaccines - Study and Temporary Authority As required by HB 1040/SB 736 (Chapters 792 and 793 of the Acts of 2021). Maryland Department of Health. July 31, 2023.

ⁱⁱⁱ Metys Health; Data drawn January 8, 2024

Vaccines administered in pharmacy setting to individuals 16 yrs & younger	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	16,262	24,796	80,890	56,418	29,924

^{iv} <https://accessagenda.nacds.org/dashboard/>

^v <https://www.nacds.org/pdfs/Opinion-Research/NACDS-OpinionResearch-Maryland.pdf>