

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1404 (Delegate Quinter, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

State Board of Pharmacy - Disciplinary Grounds - Refusal to Dispense
Prescription

This bill adds willfully refusing to dispense or refill a prescription, except as currently allowed under statute, as a reason the State Board of Pharmacy may take disciplinary action against a licensee. The bill also makes a technical change to statute.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any change in State activities would not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful for small business pharmacists and pharmacies that refuse to fill a prescription and subsequently have disciplinary action taken against them by the State Board of Pharmacy.

Analysis

Current Law: The board may take disciplinary action against an applicant for licensure or a licensee for various specified reasons including: ● fraudulently or deceptively obtaining or attempting to obtain a license; ● fraudulently or deceptively using a license; ● providing professional services while under the influence of alcohol or using any narcotic or controlled dangerous substance; or ● dispensing any drug, device, or diagnostic for which a prescription is required without a written, oral, or electronically transmitted prescription from an authorized prescriber.

A pharmacist may refuse to dispense or fill a prescription if the decision is based on professional judgment, experience, knowledge, or available reference materials. If a pharmacist refuses to dispense or refill a prescription, the pharmacist must, to the extent practicable, notify the authorized prescriber within 72 hours of the refusal. This notification requirement does not apply if a pharmacist is unable to determine the name of the authorized prescriber.

Background: Nationwide, some pharmacists are refusing to fill prescriptions for emergency contraception and contraception prescriptions. Emergency contraception is used to prevent pregnancy within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, four states – Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Dakota – have passed laws allowing a pharmacist to refuse to dispense emergency contraception drugs. Illinois passed an emergency rule that requires a pharmacist to dispense Food and Drug Administration-approved contraception. California pharmacists have a duty to dispense prescriptions and can only refuse to do so when their employer approves the refusal and the woman can still access her prescription in a timely manner.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Office of Administrative Hearings; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; *Pharmacist Conscience Clauses: Laws and Legislation*, January 2006, National Conference of State Legislatures; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 13, 2006
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