

Dear honorable members of the committee,

My name is Dr. John Hodgson and I am a practicing pharmacist and pharmacy manager at Weis Markets located in Dundalk. I've been with Weis Markets since graduating in 2019 from University of Maryland School of Pharmacy.

I am writing you today in support of HB1232 and I would like to give a personal statement to lend my backing.

As pharmacists we are some of the most accessible qualified healthcare providers available to the public. Some research suggests the public visits their local pharmacies more than double their doctor. This was never more evident than during the pandemic.

My team and I became crucial players in the pursuit of public health being more heavily relied upon for patient consultation and care, including vaccinations.

With the introduction of the PREP Act during the pandemic, access to critical vaccines was made more available to the public, including my community where we saw influx in children under 18 relying upon us for their covid vaccines, flu vaccines, and other routine childhood vaccinations. Personally, I was surprised to see the number of parents and children that took advantage of this new access available through us as my assumption was that doctor offices would still be the preferred option.

So many parents were effusive with gratitude to have a convenient option for them compared to waiting for an appointment when doctor offices were experiencing such high volume. We made it a point to accommodate walk ins for everyone, but especially children in order support the new access in this underserved population.

Vaccinating this population of my community is something that I take great pride in. As we all know – children are our future and access to healthcare is one of the most basic ways we can support our kids. Expanding this access permanently eases the burden on busy parents and allows community pharmacists to continue to do what we do best – work towards creating healthier communities.

I want to reiterate that House Bill 1232 is not adding more to our plates, it's something we've been doing for the past 2 & ½ years, taking it in stride and helping our communities. I hope you find favor in passing this bill to permanently expand healthcare access for Marylanders so they can utilize their most accessible healthcare provider, pharmacists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hodgson". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "H".

Dr. John Hodgson, PharmD