



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Senate Finance Committee

Chair: Senator Pamela Beidle

February 12, 2024

Senate Bill 0018: Health Occupations - Pharmacists - Administration of Vaccines

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 0018: Health Occupations - Pharmacists - Administration of Vaccines.

Vaccination administration is a primary level of prevention that is essential in stopping disease outbreaks before they can occur. Pharmacies proved to be a useful line of defense throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as they were able to administer vaccinations and provide general health counseling to concerned patients. Since the pandemic, over 60% of flu vaccinations have taken place in pharmacies. The vaccination for HPV in pharmacies has increased by 15% from 2018 to 2021 alone. This is a trend seen across the board for many vaccinations (Gallagher, 2023). Although the adult population is well served in this capacity, children under the age of 9 remain vulnerable. Residents are more likely to seek out a means of healthcare that is cost-effective and is convenient. Many members of our rural communities take at least one prescribed medication, which requires frequent visits to their local pharmacy. Instead of visiting a primary care provider, patients can get themselves and their families vaccinated while picking up medication. Doing so will allow both adults and children to receive preventative care without having to sacrifice time away from work and school. There has been an uptick in Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) over the last few years, and although RSV can affect anyone, it is particularly severe in children. Authorizing pharmacists to extend vaccinations to children ages 5-9 will prevent unnecessary medical costs, hospitalizations, and will further protect residents from future outbreaks of disease.

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
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