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Finance Committee

Chair

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Testimony In Support of SB 562

State Board of Pharmacy – Prescriber–Pharmacist Agreements – Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 562 strengthens Maryland's response to opioid use disorder by responsibly expanding access to medication-assisted treatment through prescriber–pharmacist agreements.

While Maryland has made progress in reducing overdose fatalities, opioid use disorder remains a persistent public health crisis. Access to evidence-based treatment, particularly medication-assisted treatment, remains uneven — especially in communities where addiction specialists are scarce.

SB 562 authorizes pharmacists, under strict safeguards, to enter into prescriber–pharmacist agreements that allow them to treat opioid use disorder using controlled dangerous substances drug therapy.

The bill establishes a rigorous safety framework. Participating pharmacists must:

- Individually register with the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration and the Maryland Office of Controlled Substances Administration;
- Complete all required federal and state training;
- Operate under written, disease-specific protocols with an authorized prescriber; and
- Query the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program before initiating or modifying controlled dangerous substances therapy.

These safeguards ensure comprehensive oversight of a patient's prescriptive history and maintain full compliance with federal and state law.

The Maryland Board of Pharmacy supports this legislation and has emphasized that it expands access to life-saving medication-assisted treatment while maintaining strong regulatory guardrails.

In addition, SB 562 streamlines administrative processes by repealing the duplicative requirement that prescribers submit agreements to their respective health occupations boards. Agreements will continue to be submitted to the Board of Pharmacy, preserving oversight while reducing unnecessary administrative barriers. This centralization encourages more physicians to participate in collaborative agreements that increase treatment access.

The sponsor amendment clarifies that Licensed Certified Midwives are recognized as authorized prescribers within this framework, consistent with current prescriptive authority.

This bill does not expand scope without guardrails. It leverages the accessibility and clinical expertise of pharmacists to increase patient access to evidence-based treatment in a structured and compliant manner.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 562.

Thank you.