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Budget and Taxation Committee

Chair
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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The Honorable Chair Beidle
The Honorable Vice Chair Hayes
Finance Committee
Senate of Maryland

February 17th, 2026

SB506: Health Occupations – Pharmacists – Minor Conditions and HIV Prevention and Treatment

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee,

Senate Bill 506: Health Occupations – Pharmacists – Minor Conditions and HIV Prevention and Treatment would allow pharmacists to treat conditions that either: 1) do not require a new diagnosis, 2) are minor and or naturally recoverable, or 3) have a test that’s used to guide diagnosis or clinical decisions. Additionally, pharmacists will be able to test for and treat minor conditions such as cold sores, strep throat, the flu, lice, COVID-19, urinary tract infections, skin conditions such as athlete’s foot, and other emerging health challenges as authorized by the Board of Pharmacy.

Pharmacists have increasingly become front-line public health providers since 2020, having safely administered over 12.6 million vaccinations to Maryland residents. Across the State, there are fewer than 80 primary care providers for every 10,000 residents.¹ In 2024, more than 40% of children in Maryland are without a “medical home.”² They do not have a consistent relationship with a healthcare provider for well-child visits and checkups. As of this year, 1,170,262 Maryland residents live in a Health Professional Shortage Area for primary care physicians.³

This legislation will help address Maryland’s existing gaps in access to health services. By creating a new treatment access point in rural and historically underserved urban areas, Senate Bill 506 will increase provider availability. Moreover, pharmacists are open in the evening and on weekends, making them the most accessible health professionals in many communities. Many primary care physicians are open only during business hours, causing a significant access barrier to workers without paid medical leave. Pharmacists are also the primary point of healthcare for the uninsured and underinsured, and the expanded services proposed in Senate Bill 506 would create increased access for

¹ Miller, H., & Cohn, M. (2023, March 27). *Why it’s hard to find a doctor in Maryland right now*. The Baltimore Banner. Massachusetts

² Kaiser Family Foundation. (2026, January 23). *Percent of children with a medical home: KFF State Health Facts*. KFF.

³ Ngyuen, A. (2025, July 15) *Mapping Healthcare Deserts: Over 80% of the Country Still Lacks Adequate Access to Healthcare*. GoodRX.emergency

those patients. Often patients are not choosing between different types of providers, but whether they seek care at all.

Senate Bill 506 will also help relieve some of the strain on the state's overburdened healthcare system. Maryland has some of the highest emergency department wait times in the country, sometimes extending beyond 12 hours. By diverting care for minor conditions, states that have expanded pharmacist services have seen measurable reductions in emergency department utilization for minor illness. Pharmacists can address the minor conditions outlined in this bill and refer patients to appropriate providers for more serious concerns, reducing the need for emergency departments to serve as the only option. Recent data shows 90% of patients treated by pharmacists for minor conditions would have otherwise gone to a general practitioner or emergency room.⁴

There is statewide and national precedence for this legislation. Maryland has previously authorized and successfully implemented other expanded services for Maryland pharmacists, including vaccines, other testing services, and access to contraception. Additionally, more than 30 other states allow pharmacists to conduct point-of-care tests for minor conditions and then dispense the appropriate medication directly to that patient. The majority of those states give pharmacists the independent authority — Senate Bill 506's scope is narrower, requiring pharmacists to operate under a statewide protocol or standing order developed by their regulating agency.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Senator Karen Lewis Young

⁴Little, J., Bluml, B., Ambegaonkar, A., & Revanth, D. (2025). Project impact: Test and treat. increasing access to test and treat services through community pharmacy. *INNOVATIONS in Pharmacy*, 16(2).