



OHIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New bill from Sen. Sherrod Brown to utilize pharmacists to lower health care costs, improve outcomes in underserved areas**

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Pharmacists Association (OPA), the statewide professional organization of Ohio pharmacists – and partner of the Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (PAPCC) – applauds the introduction of legislation in the U.S. Senate to recognize the role that pharmacists can play in addressing patient access-to-care issues in medically underserved communities throughout the nation.

The *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act, S.109*, recently introduced by Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Bob Casey (D-PA), and already has 27 original cosponsors. The legislation encourages pharmacists to offer health care services such as health and wellness screenings, immunizations, and diabetes management by authorizing Medicare payments for those services where pharmacists are already licensed under state law to provide them. Most states already allow pharmacists to provide these services, but there currently is no way for pharmacists to receive Medicare reimbursement for providing them.

“Seniors in rural Ohio shouldn’t have to travel long distances to see their doctor for a simple health screening when the pharmacist down the street can offer the same services,” said Senator Sherrod Brown. “We can better serve our seniors and taxpayers by cutting through the red tape and giving seniors more choice on where they go for care”

OPA Executive Director Ernest Boyd heralded the introduction of the legislation saying, “Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown has recognized the value of pharmacists through the introduction of this important legislation.”

“It is excellent to see the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act (S. 109) introduced with significant bipartisan cosponsorship and led by Senator Sherrod Brown. This bill would enable Medicare patients to receive medication management from pharmacists in areas where the pharmacist is often the most accessible healthcare professional,” said OPA President Chet Kaczor. “I commend Senator Brown for his visionary leadership to improve access to and outcomes of care for underserved Medicare patients.”

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, nearly 70 of Ohio’s 88 counties contain areas designated as “medically underserved,” meaning there are not enough primary care services for residents of those areas. Many physician offices have stopped carrying vaccines or offering comprehensive chronic disease management services, which is partly why many states like Ohio allow for pharmacists to engage in those services.

“Just as the states have evolved to allow patients better access to care; it is time for Medicare to evolve as well,” said Boyd.

The Ohio Pharmacists Association (OPA), established in 1879, is a statewide organization representing more than 3,500 pharmacists, pharmacy educators, and pharmacy students from all types of pharmacy practice settings. It is OPA’s mission to unite the profession of pharmacy and encourage interprofessional relations, while promoting public health through education, discussion, and legislation. OPA strongly supports the growth of clinical pharmacist services, and the improvement of patient care that those services provide. For more information, go to <http://ohiopharmacists.org/>.

OPA is proud partner of the Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (PAPCC), a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary initiative. Membership is comprised of organizations representing patients, pharmacists, and pharmacies, as well as other interested stakeholders. Our mission is to develop and help enact a federal policy proposal that would enable patient access to, and payment for, Medicare Part B services by state-licensed pharmacists in medically underserved communities. Our primary goal is to expand medically underserved patients’ access to pharmacist services consistent with state scope of practice law. For more information, go to <http://pharmacistscare.org/>.

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