

Dear Chair Murray and Members of Senate HHS:

My name is Eric Pohl. I am a 4th-year pharmacy student at the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy. I currently work in the community pharmacy setting at CVS in Charlestown, Rhode Island. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2888.

This bill allows pharmacists to prescribe and dispense medications for smoking cessation, as well as be reimbursed for these services. Giving pharmacists the ability to assess patients, prescribe nicotine replacement or smoking cessation therapy, and follow up with patients would greatly increase opportunities for smoking cessation. With the current shortage of primary care providers, pharmacists are poised to assist patients looking to stop smoking and are available within the community.

As a pharmacy student, we receive extensive education and training on smoking cessation. We have been taught how to assess nicotine dependence severity, recommend appropriate guidelines and treatment, counsel on medications, and provide follow-up. This goes to show that pharmacists are well trained in smoking cessation and can fill a gap in care that can prevent negative long-term outcomes such as COPD, hypertension, and increased cancer risk, all of which are caused by smoking.

The ability for pharmacists to be reimbursed for services provided for smoking cessation is essential in the implementation of such programs. Pharmacists are ready and willing to work directly with patients, prescribe, counsel, and follow up, but need to be compensated accordingly. If these services were performed by another healthcare provider and reimbursed, the same should be done for pharmacists.

This bill increases accessibility to smoking cessation by allowing pharmacists to provide a service well within their scope of practice. Reimbursement for these services allows pharmacists to serve their community directly by being accessible to prescribe and dispense nicotine replacement therapy.

Eric Pohl,  
Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate  
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Pohl".