



**County
Health Officials
of New York**
Leading the way to healthier communities

SUPPORTS

With Recommendations

A.6476/S.4807 (Hyndman/Stavisky)

AN ACT amending the education law in relation to pharmacists immunizations; to amend chapter 563 of the laws of 2008, amending the education law and the public health law related to immunizing agents administered to adults by pharmacists, in relation to the effectiveness thereof; and to amend chapter 116 of the laws of 2012, amending the education law relating to authorizing a licensed pharmacist and certified nurse practitioner to administer certain immunizing agents, in relation to the effectiveness thereof

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislation which amends the education law to current provisions authorizing licensed pharmacists to administer all vaccines within the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) guidelines and allowing physicians and certified nurse practitioners to issue patient or non-patient specific orders to licensed pharmacists for administering the recommended adult vaccines.

NYSACHO is committed to improving health, preventing disease, and increasing adult immunization rates as an evidence-based public health intervention. For over a decade, pharmacists have proven to be important partners in contributing to the accessible and timely delivery of vaccines to adults and improved overall adult immunization rates for those vaccine-preventative diseases they are currently authorized to administer. Allowing pharmacists to administer all recommended vaccines to adults will further prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. Approximately half of registered pharmacists in New York State have taken the necessary training and are SED certified to administer vaccines; significantly expanding access and availability of immunizations for adults.

While NYSACHO believes that individuals are best served when they receive coordinated primary care within their medical home, local health officials know that many areas of the state, particularly rural communities, lack access to primary care providers. Allowing pharmacists who meet educational requirements to be certified as immunizers helps address this issue by increasing opportunities for individuals to receive necessary vaccines.

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists as immunizers serve as an additional access point to increase the rate of the COVID-19 vaccination. This legislation would expand the availability of CDC adult recommended vaccines in medically underserved areas. Moreover, allowing certified nurse practitioners to prescribe and order regimens, both patient or non-patient specific, to licensed pharmacists will expedite the vaccination process and improve rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as COVID-19, influenza, and pneumococcal disease.

The legislation also removes the requirement of patient or non-patient specific orders for pharmacists may come only from a physician or nurse practitioner practicing in the same or adjoining county. These provisions would bring practice in alignment with non-patient specific standing orders for nurses and be more efficient for

large retail chain pharmacies. NYSACHO believes that that the current training, regulations, and professional oversight for pharmacists warrant the removal of this legal impediment to access to adult immunizations.

Recommendations:

NYSACHO supports the inclusion in this bill of interim reporting requirements to assess the impact of this statute. As the Legislature and Executive review that data, NYSACHO believes there is the need for future consideration of additional controls in this area:

1. The NYS Executive and Legislative branches should consider strengthening enforcement mechanisms available to NYSDOH to ensure that immunization data are entered into NYSIIS by pharmacists, nurse practitioners, as well as by medical providers. It is important to the public's health that this information is available to other medical providers for continuity of care, and to public health officials who may need it during a disease outbreak.
2. Broad access to immunizations helps to meet important population health goals. Large retail outlets may have more capacity for vaccine storage and bulk ordering needed to keep vaccine supplies as available as needed, which is often a challenge for small medical or public health providers. However, NYSACHO is concerned about the potential long-term impacts of shifting public access to immunizations to large for-profit corporate entities when those businesses have no legal or professional obligation to continue the practice. While pharmacists or physicians within these corporations have ethical obligations as medical professionals, their power within the corporate board room may be limited. Expanding vaccination responsibilities carries with it a risk that pharmacies could, at some future point, with little notice, choose to discontinue these services if they deem it detrimental to their business interests. Some future regulatory protections against a wholesale collapse of immunization access within pharmacies may need to be considered if we are to ensure a strong public health infrastructure.

NYSACHO believes every effort must be made to assure that adults are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. We, therefore, support this legislation for the afore-mentioned reasons and recommend this proposal be enacted into law.

Contact: Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director, sarah@nysacho.org