



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 1, 2023

To: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Support with Amendments - House Bill 456- Pharmacies - Prescription Drugs - Accessible Labels for Blind, Visually Impaired, and Print Disabled Individuals

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 456 with amendments. Maryland hospitals support efforts to help patients better understand the drugs they are taking. This promotes better medication adherence and leads to improved health outcomes. While we support its intent, we urge an amendment to clarify that HB 456 would exclude hospital pharmacies.

As health care providers, Maryland hospitals are acutely aware of the challenges faced by the visually impaired. The inability to see may cause patients to take the wrong drug or take the correct drug at inappropriate doses or frequencies. Accessible labels that help patients correctly identify the medication and remind them of the regimen should help prevent or reduce medication errors.

The accessible label requirement, however, should exclude hospital pharmacies. Unlike community pharmacies that dispense outpatient drugs, hospital pharmacies that care for inpatients coordinate with hospital staff to optimize medication adherence. When questions arise, hospital staff are on hand to review the drugs with patients, and the staff will proffer the prescribed medication to patients at the appropriate time and dosage. Imposing an accessible label requirement will unnecessarily increase administrative burden for hospitals without adding any patient benefit.

We also encourage the sponsors to include financial and technical support to help community pharmacies offset challenges providing accessible labels. While accessible labels can be vital to patients, the additional costs are rarely reimbursed and must be absorbed by community pharmacies alone. The United States Government Accountability Office identified high costs and technical difficulties among the key challenges pharmacies face in providing accessible labels.¹ Additional resources can help pharmacies overcome barriers and ensure patients receive the prescription drug information they need.

¹ "Prescription Drug Labels: Actions Needed to Increase Awareness of Best Practices for Accessible Labels for Individuals Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired," United States Government Accountability Office, Dec. 2016. www.gao.gov/products/gao-17-115

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with sponsors to move this issue forward.

For more information, please contact:
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