

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee regarding
HB5511 AN ACT EXPANDING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OPIOID SETTLEMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND MAKING THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE
RECOMMENDED TECHNICAL REVISIONS.**

March 26, 2024

Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, Rep. Axum, Rep. Paris, Sen. Berthel, Rep. Nuccio and members of the Committee:

The Connecticut Pharmacists Association and the Connecticut Society of Health-System Pharmacists together represent some 6,000 community and institutional pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and student pharmacists in every practice setting.

As the CDC says, “Pharmacists are an essential part of the healthcare team. On the front lines of dispensing opioid pain medications and providing medication-related services, pharmacists can play a key role by engaging in prevention and treatment efforts to address opioid use disorder and overdose.”¹

Pharmacists possess unique knowledge about the safe and effective use of medications and about the adverse events resulting from inappropriate use. Pharmacies are sites of distribution of the opioid antagonist naloxone, which has been shown to save lives when made available to opioid users and their families or other potential bystanders to an overdose; and pharmacists can provide guidance about its use and even legal protections for bystanders to an overdose that customers may not be aware of. Pharmacists can also recommend addiction treatment to patients and be a resource for information on addiction treatment options in the community. As substance use treatment becomes more integrated with general healthcare, pharmacies are also increasingly dispensing medications like buprenorphine and, in the future, possibly methadone.

And yet, in the past, when Connecticut has enacted opioid-related law, pharmacists have rarely been consulted or invited to the table, despite the fact that every one of those laws directly impacts pharmacists and pharmacy practice.

The list of members proposed in HB5511 to join the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee includes substance use specialists, hospitals, and recovery coaches, among others. It does not, however, include an expert in pharmaceutical distribution and drug supply chain safety—namely, a pharmacist.

We therefore respectfully request that, just as a “hospital association representative” has been proposed, that a representative of a pharmacist association in the state be appointed to the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee. Connecticut’s pharmacists are on the front line of combatting the state’s opioid crisis, and stand ready to work effectively with the Committee.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/implementation-toolkits/pharmacists.html#:~:text=Pharmacists are an essential part,opioid use disorder and overdose.>