



Testimony before Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
SB 200 – Scope of Practice
Tonya McClain – Walmart

Testimony in support

February 25, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

Good morning! My name is Tonya McClain, I am a Market Health and Wellness Director for Walmart here in the state of Kansas. The stores I oversee are in the greater Wichita, KS area and I have been a pharmacist in Kansas for 19 years.

Thank you for having me today to testify in support of Senate Bill 200, which would expand the scope of practice for pharmacists. As a Market Health and Wellness Director, I am enthusiastic about the prospect of increasing our ability to serve patients and improve and protect the health of my community. Walmart, one of the largest retailers in America, serves over 160 million customers each week. Walmart has a unique vantage point for the experiences of American consumers as 90% of Americans live within 10 miles of their stores. Counting supercenters, discount stores, neighborhood markets and Sam's Clubs, Walmart has over 80 retail units in Kansas, employing over 20,000 associates and collecting on behalf of the state over \$375M in taxes. Key components of our retail business involve pharmacy, in-store grocery sales as well as in-home delivery and grocery pickup.

For many Americans, pharmacies are the most accessible providers of health and wellness services and care. In fact, more than 90% of Americans live within five miles of a pharmacy—enabling convenient access to services and care, particularly for those who do not live near medical treatment centers.

This statistic is particularly relevant here in Kansas, where we rank 40th in the country in number of doctors, with only 227.6 active physicians per 100,000 residents. Further compounding this issue, 8 rural Kansas hospitals have closed in the past 15 years leading to reduced healthcare access in rural communities. By empowering the 3,490 pharmacists employed in Kansas to provide basic point of care testing and treatment for easily remedied health conditions, we would make it easier for citizens to access crucial healthcare services.

Increasing accessibility to basic health services is not just about convenience—it can be a matter of life and death. Nationally, Streptococcal infections result in 45,000 cases and 2,500 deaths each year. And in Kansas, roughly 2,000 people lose their lives annually as a result of flu-related illnesses.

Permitting pharmacists to conduct Point of Care (POC) testing and treatment will expand access to healthcare for common and easily treated health conditions like influenza and strep. And if pharmacists were empowered to act upon positive point-of-care test results, they could diminish the severity of impact.

Beyond improving accessibility, increasing the scope of practice for pharmacists in Kansas would improve affordability. This applies to both the financial burden that untreated illness places on the healthcare system and the cost of care for patients.

Many times, high costs to health care consumers and payors spike when minor illnesses are left untreated due to lack of access to care. Influenza alone costs Americans \$10.4 billion annually in direct costs for hospitalizations and outpatient visits, with an economic burden of \$83.3 billion.

Identifying and treating illnesses early on can result in better long-term health outcomes and therefore diminish the financial impact that severe illness can result in. Many pharmacies are also able to provide services at an affordable price point. The impact that affordable pharmacy services could have on citizens of this state is illustrated by a sobering statistic: over 13% of Kansans report not seeing a doctor in the past 12 months because of cost.

Allowing pharmacists to provide basic testing and treatment services could significantly increase access to affordable healthcare for people in our state. If the last year has taught us anything, it is the crucial role that pharmacists already play as trusted health and wellness providers in our communities.

For many months, pharmacists have been on the front lines of the pandemic, risking their own health to provide crucial services, Covid-19 testing, and now leading the charge to vaccinate patients against the virus.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, pharmacists were playing a significant role in ensuring that Americans are vaccinated against common and preventable illnesses. In 2018, 32% of adult flu vaccine recipients were administered the vaccine in a store or pharmacy. In 2019 alone, pharmacists administered over 45 million vaccinations across the U.S., with 505,000 administered here in Kansas.

Along with physicians, therapists, nurses, and techs, pharmacists are trusted members of the teams that care for patients in our state. We are well positioned to provide accessible and affordable health services.

By allowing us to practice at the top of our licenses and provide point of care testing and treatment, you can further empower us to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

For these reasons, I urge you to support SB 200, and to support pharmacists across Kansas.

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Best Regards,

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