

October 11, 2023

The Honorable Stephen A. Huffman  
Chairman, Ohio Senate Health Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

**RE: Support for Ohio Senate Bill 144**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Health Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for Senate Bill 144, a bill that would restore important access to pharmacy-based healthcare services.

Over the last three years, pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians have been providing vital healthcare services. The federal Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act granted these professionals temporary authority to provide a broader access of vaccines to individuals ages 3 years and older. This authorization has been incredibly successful, with pharmacists, interns, and technicians across the state administering millions of immunizations to children and families in just a few years.

Unfortunately, with the expiration of the federal PREP Act allowances in May, these abilities have gone away. Fortunately, Senate Bill 144, which largely mirrors the PREP Act, would take the necessary steps to make broader access to vaccinations permanent and ensure that patients can continue to receive important care at their local pharmacies.

Pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians are integral members of the community that bring significant value to the individuals they serve. Pharmacists are trusted, highly trained health care professionals that could be a first stop on a patient's health care journey, most frequently due to availability, affordability, and/or geography. As you may know, nearly 90 percent of Americans live within 5 miles of a community pharmacy. In Ohio, Walmart and Sam's Club operate 143 pharmacies and 27 pharmacies, respectively.

Doctors have historically had primary responsibility for providing care to patients, and we expect that to continue, but pharmacists can play a critical and complimentary role in providing essential clinical care to the public, particularly in health professional shortage areas.

Pharmacists are in a unique position to provide a variety of clinical services intended to improve patient health outcomes. As Senator Romanchuk noted in his sponsor testimony, current law

requires pharmacists to report all immunizations administered to a patient's primary care provider. If a pharmacist learns that a child has no primary care provider, Senate Bill 144 would require the pharmacist to counsel the parent on the importance of child well-visits and make a referral to a pediatrician, if appropriate. This is a perfect example of how pharmacies and prescribers can partner to reduce health disparities and bridge the gap for those who live in rural and medically underserved areas.

Codifying pharmacists' ability to provide services authorized under the PREP Act is essential for maintaining patient access to healthcare services. Senate Bill 144 is not asking to provide any services that the pharmacy community has not already proven itself capable of delivering. It is merely a matter of codifying current practice and recognizing the essential role that they play in the communities they serve. All individuals must have equal access to the quality, affordable health resources they deserve. Let's take this opportunity to modernize pharmacy practice and ensure that patients can continue to receive important care at their local pharmacies.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today. We respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 144.

Respectfully,



**Rachael Carl**

Director, Public & Government Affairs  
Walmart, Inc.