

To OHR Insurance Committee:

After reading my statement, I hope you will understand the urgent need to support House Bill 192, *The Community Pharmacy Protection Act*. At the end of 2024, Schwieterman Pharmacy, a fixture in our communities for 108 years, closed all four of its locations. These pharmacies served countless residents across rural Mercer, Auglaize, and Shelby counties—communities that now face a significant gap in access to essential healthcare services.

Why did this happen? The primary driver is the trend in PBM (pharmacy benefit manager) reimbursement. Pharmacies cannot survive when multiple prescriptions per day are reimbursed at \$25 to \$50 below the cost of the medication. Even the prescriptions reimbursed above cost often yield less than \$3 in profit. The math is simple: no business can remain open under such conditions.

This is a real and pressing problem for rural Ohio. Ask your constituents in New Bremen, Minster, Coldwater, St. Henry, Maria Stein, or Fort Loramie—just a few of the communities affected—how they feel about not having a local pharmacy. Residents now face challenges filling essential medications, obtaining vaccinations, accessing a healthcare professional for questions about their medications, monitoring devices, or getting advice on proper dosing for their children.

House Bill 192 represents an important step forward to curb PBM overreach and to protect independent community pharmacies from the “take it or leave it” contracts that threaten their viability. I stress that this is only one step—enforcement must be taken seriously, as PBMs have proven unable to self-regulate. Across the country, states are actively addressing PBM abuses, and Ohio must not be left behind.

I urge you to support House Bill 192 and to stand with the residents of rural Ohio in safeguarding access to essential healthcare services.

Sincerely,

Rena M Gaerke, RPh