

Dear Chair Cirino and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my support for several key provisions and reforms under consideration in the Ohio budget proposal. Below I will share why these items are essential to protect pharmacy access and ensure cost-effective care for Ohioans.

1. The payment transparency measure included in the Barhorst provision is critically important to ensure continued patient access to local pharmacies, especially in underserved areas. By requiring pharmacies to be reimbursed at their actual cost, this policy offers a practical solution to the alarming trend of pharmacy closures across the state. This model has already proven effective under Ohio Medicaid, saving taxpayers over \$140 million.
2. I urge you to include House Bill 229 in the state budget. This bill addresses the monopolistic practices of pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), three of which currently control 80% of the market. These entities operate with minimal transparency, leading to inflated costs and compromised care. House Bill 229 would bring much-needed accountability and pricing clarity, benefiting both Ohio patients and the pharmacies that serve them.
3. I am also concerned about restrictions previously proposed in the budget that would have prevented Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) from contracting with community pharmacies under the 340B program. This program is a lifeline for many Ohioans, especially in rural and underserved areas. FQHCs cannot meet the growing pharmacy needs of their communities on their own. Restoring this provision in the budget will ensure continued access to medications and prevent cost increases that could arise from limiting these partnerships.
4. I strongly support maintaining the single PBM model for Ohio Medicaid. This streamlined approach has already saved Ohio taxpayers \$140 million in just two years and has introduced a level of fairness and transparency previously absent from PBM operations. Reverting to a fragmented system would expose Ohio's pharmacies to unchecked pricing abuses once again. The single PBM model is working—please keep it in place.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. I urge you to prioritize pharmacy access, patient care, and fiscal responsibility in your final budget decisions.

Sincerely,
Brittany Bates, PharmD, BCPS