

Members of the Finance Committee:

I am writing to address two key legislative issues which directly impact a significant number of your constituent's access to healthcare. First, the pharmacy payment transparency and stabilization provision from the House version of the budget needs to be brought back into the budget proposal. Second, House Bill 229/ Senate Bill 210 regarding PBM reform needs to be added to the budget.

Pharmacy deserts are not some future problem. It is a NOW problem. Schwieterman Pharmacies served approximately 22,000 patients in Coldwater, New Bremen, Wapakoneta, Minster, and the surrounding communities. Due to monopolistic PBM behaviors of "take it or leave it" contracts and reimbursement of medication at less than cost, all four locations closed at the end of 2024.

The Ohio Board of Pharmacy established Outpatient Pharmacy Minimum Standards in May 2024. These are rules mandated by the State Board of Pharmacy to ensure patient safety. Additionally, as pharmacists, we are required to complete continuing education involving patient medication safety. This is all well and good, but does not address an underlying cause of medication errors and lack of access to healthcare. If a pharmacy is reimbursed below cost of goods, even after calling up to six different vendors trying to get the best price possible, you cannot hire staff to help maintain these standards. Additionally, when pharmacies close neighboring pharmacies take on an extra volume of prescriptions. These pharmacies cannot hire extra staff, because they are not being reimbursed above cost either. You now have a very dangerous situation that does impact patient safety.

Your constituents are experiencing the negative effects of pharmacy closures, they just don't know that **you** can do something about it. Please consider supporting pharmacy payment transparency and stabilization, as well as House Bill 229/Senate Bill 210.

Thank you for your time,
Renae M Gaerke, RPh