

January 6, 2017

Dear Senator:

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) is writing to express our strong concerns about potential amendments to S. Con. Res. 3 that could allow for the personal or commercial importation of prescription drugs.

NACDS represents traditional drug stores and supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' more than 100 chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ more than 3.2 million individuals, including 178,000 pharmacists. They fill over 3 billion prescriptions yearly, and help patients use medicines correctly and safely, while offering innovative services that improve patient health and healthcare affordability. NACDS members also include more than 850 supplier partners and over 60 international members representing 21 countries. Please visit nacds.org.

NACDS shares the goal of reducing the cost of prescription drugs, including through the promotion of generic drugs as safe, cost-effective alternatives for many patients. In fact, increasing the use of generic drugs is one of the most effective ways to minimize prescription drug costs.

However, we do not believe that consumer safety can be ensured in any system that allows for the personal or commercial importation of prescription medications. The United States has an extensive safety net of federal and state laws to ensure that prescription drugs are manufactured, stored, shipped, dispensed and used in a safe manner. That safety net is eliminated, however, when prescription drugs are imported from foreign suppliers.

Drugs coming into the United States from foreign websites and mail order operations are not subject to U.S. regulation, nor are they subject to regulation in the country from which they originate. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has stated that it:

...cannot ensure the safety and effectiveness of products that are not FDA-approved and come from unknown sources and foreign locations, or that may not have been manufactured under proper conditions. These unknowns put patients' health at risk if they cannot be sure of the products identity, purity, and source. For these reasons, FDA recommends only obtaining medicines from legal sources in the U.S.¹

Additionally, the potential for counterfeit drugs being mailed into the U.S. from foreign Internet sites offering prescription drugs is very high. Further, if a foreign dispensed drug is

¹ <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm170594.htm> (accessed on January 21, 2015)

subject to a recall or is withdrawn from the market, there is no way to inform patients and protect them from harm.

In addition to questions concerning the safety and effectiveness of the drugs, individuals who obtain prescription medications through personal importation schemes do not have a licensed pharmacist available to consult with them about using the medications safely and effectively. Every day, retail pharmacists assist customers with obtaining the most cost effective, therapeutically-appropriate drug therapies.

As the Senate moves ahead to debate on S. Con. Res. 3, we look forward to working with you to advance alternative policies that expand access to prescription medications in safe, affordable, and effective ways.

Sincerely,

National Association of Chain Drug Stores