



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
CHAIN DRUG STORES

Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM

President & Chief Executive Officer

July 22, 2020

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

**Before leaving for the summer, Congress needs to address a nagging barrier preventing more pharmacies and pharmacists from launching COVID-19 testing services that are crucial for patients, public health, communities, and the economy.**

**Congress must designate pharmacists as healthcare providers under Medicare for services related to COVID-19, flu and other respiratory viruses. Otherwise, an obvious access point for COVID-19 testing services remains underfunded and underutilized. This cannot remain the case while Congress has authorized more than \$6 trillion and counting for other items under the COVID-19 umbrella.**

We write to you as the national association representing traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. NACDS members include regional chains with a minimum of four stores and national companies, and they operate over 40,000 pharmacies with 155,000 pharmacists. There is a neighborhood pharmacy within five miles of 90 percent of Americans – presenting solutions for those suffering from disparities of care.

**Pharmacies and pharmacists can help bring more COVID-19 testing services to the American people in two ways – and a lack of emergency provider status jeopardizes both of them.** One approach is the public-private partnership whereby several NACDS member companies are answering the call. The other approach is to empower pharmacies and pharmacists to ramp up additional strategies and locations for testing services, beyond the partnership. **Without provider status, pharmacies have no reliable path to create solutions for testing services outside of the public-private partnership, and many locations within the partnership will not be feasible if the program is ended.**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken vital action to establish that pharmacists are crucial to COVID-19 testing services. But this is only half of a solution since no clear pathway exists for pharmacists to bill for the product and service. Creating this reimbursement pathway in Medicare will spur coverage across other programs and private insurance.

**Pharmacies and pharmacists stand among those who are empowering our nation's COVID-19 response.** Pharmacies and pharmacists have focused on staying open to help provide products and services related to COVID-19 and other health and wellness needs; on protecting the health and safety of customers and staff teams; on expanding physically-distanced delivery programs for medications and more; on helping to keep patients on their medication therapies amid challenges; on preparing for the crucial flu vaccination season and ultimately to help deploy COVID-19 treatments and vaccines efficiently and effectively; and much more.

Pharmacies and pharmacists want to help America better confront the most severe public health threat of our generation, but when it comes to ramping up testing services they cannot do more given the current barriers. Provider status is a crucial solution, and Congress needs to act on it now, before leaving town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven C. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven C. Anderson, FASAE, CAE, IOM  
President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: President Donald J. Trump  
Vice President Michael R. Pence  
Deborah L. Birx, M.D., Coronavirus Response Coordinator  
Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma  
Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D., Assistant Secretary for Health