



March 24, 2022

The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters  
United States Senate  
724 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 2051

**Re: Medical Nutrition Therapy Act of 2021 (S. 1536)**

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Peters:

Given our commitment to a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to health, wellness, and equity, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) strongly supports your bill, S. 1536, the Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) Act of 2021. We are enthusiastic about helping to advance your bipartisan legislation that would enhance Medicare coverage for MNT to more conditions and expand referring capabilities to help patients most at risk of experiencing health disparities.

MNT is delivered by registered dietitian nutritionists, including those practicing in the retail setting at NACDS members' locations. While a physician's referral currently is required for a beneficiary to utilize MNT services under Medicare Part B, your legislation would empower nurse practitioners, physician assistants, clinical nurse specialists and psychologists to refer their patients for MNT. NACDS requests that you consider including pharmacists among the professionals who may refer their patients for MNT when this bill advances or when it is re-introduced in the next Congress.

NACDS members offer tremendous opportunities for expansion of MNT services, as there is a pharmacy within five miles of 90 percent of Americans.<sup>1</sup> Beyond geography, NACDS members serve as the face of neighborhood healthcare with trust, accessibility, convenience, and equity. A poll of adults conducted March 4-6, 2022, by Morning Consult and commissioned by NACDS found that pharmacies remain the most accessible healthcare destinations – they received the highest ratings for ease of access among the destinations tested. Of importance to the vision of your legislation, 79 percent support pharmacists helping patients prevent chronic disease such as heart disease and diabetes (45 percent indicate strong support), and 79 percent support pharmacists helping patients to understand their nutritional choices (43 percent indicate strong support).

NACDS emphasizes the critical implications of your legislation for helping to improve health equity and to address social determinants of health. Pharmacies' commitment to health equity emerged front-and-center during the pandemic with the deployment of COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. Well prior to this public health emergency, NACDS engaged with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other entities to confront the inter-relationships between poverty, poor education, poor nutrition, and threats to health and wellness. Our support for your legislation is a natural extension of this work.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the breadth and reach of NACDS member pharmacies is provided below, in the page 2 footer.

NACDS is pleased to support this legislation to help confront the human and financial costs of chronic health conditions. While current law only allows Medicare to cover out-patient MNT services for patients suffering from renal disease and diabetes, your legislation would make MNT available for those confronting prediabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, malnutrition, eating disorders, cancer, gastrointestinal diseases including celiac disease, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular disease and any other disease or condition causing unintentional weight loss. MNT has been shown to be part of a cost-effective aspect of prevention and treatment for many of these conditions. Considering the convenience and equitable access of pharmacists practicing in community retail pharmacies, along with consumer interest in receiving nutrition-related and chronic disease prevention services from pharmacists, we ask that pharmacists be included among the referring professionals in the legislation. Doing so would expand use of pharmacist expertise to help manage chronic conditions to a wider range of patients, especially those who may be experiencing health disparities and be most at risk of developing and suffering chronic health conditions.

NACDS applauds your leadership on the Medical Nutrition Therapy Act and looks forward to assisting you in its advancement for the benefit of patients nationwide.

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 & Chief Executive Officer

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NACDS represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate over 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' over 80 chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ nearly 3 million individuals, including 155,000 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 900 supplier partners and over 70 international members representing 21 countries. Please visit [NACDS.org](http://NACDS.org).