



December 2, 2015

Senator John McCain
SR-241 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) is writing to express our strong concerns with your recently introduced Amendment No. 2884 to amend H.R.3762, the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015, to allow for the importation of prescription drugs from Canada.

NACDS represents traditional drug stores and supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate more than 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ more than 3.2 million individuals, including 179,000 pharmacists. They fill over 2.9 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 22 countries. For more information, visit www.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 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 when prescription drugs are imported from foreign suppliers and greatly contributes to the potential for counterfeit drugs being imported into the U.S.

Many pharmaceutical products sold in other countries – albeit containing the same active pharmaceutical ingredients as those sold here – may have different shapes, sizes, colors, and even trade names. Some are made with different inactive ingredients, while some are sold in different doses because the patients in other countries have different dose-response relationships. Introducing different-looking foreign pharmaceutical products into the U.S. system will only confuse patients and health professionals. Consequently, patient safety is put at risk. 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

Furthermore, 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.

We applaud the efforts of Congress to expand access to prescription medications and are committed to working with you to advance policies that do so in a safe, affordable and effective way. However, in light of patient safety dangers relating to quality and consistency of pharmaceutical supply, and potential disruptions to the existing efficient pharmaceutical distribution system, NACDS has significant concerns about importation and opposes Amendment 2884.

Sincerely,

National Association of Chain Drug Stores

¹ <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm170594.htm> (accessed on May 20, 2015)