



Testimony

HB 1622

Testimony Before the Texas House Public Health Committee

by David Balat, Director

My name is David Balat, director of Right on Healthcare with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and I am in support of HB 1622 and for the authority of a physician to provide and dispense certain drugs at the point of care.

This bill is good for patients.

It allows for medication delivered at the point of care in a day and age where the price of drugs is a real obstacle for many Texans. We have all heard stories of people going without their blood pressure medicine, or rationing their insulin, or trading off with their spouse each month because they simply cannot afford both prescriptions.

The independent pharmacists have expressed their concern with the price of drugs and that it is a function of their having to deal with insurance formularies and the pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs). Unless there is more transparency in the system, prices will likely climb. Physicians who will be dispensing in their practice will not have to deal with PBMs or insurers and will therefore circumvent the convoluted system that has increased drug pricing. Patients, by paying cash at the doctor's office, will potentially be paying a small fraction of what they would pay otherwise. This is not a complaint against the independent pharmacists as they have become subject to a broken system. HB 1622 could give relief to patients by allowing them to afford needed medications and take them as needed. This could prevent some patients from forgoing medications and ending up in an ER in critical condition.

In 2018, nearly 30 percent of Americans did not take their prescriptions as recommended because of the cost. Additionally, 19 percent did not fill their prescriptions, 18 percent took over-the-counter drugs instead, and 12 percent cut their pills in half or skipped doses due to cost. Physician dispense can improve medication adherence by making prescription-filling more convenient and providing patients the opportunity to take their first dose in their physician's office with assistance from a physician or nurse. Physician dispense will expand physicians' ability to provide care, improve patients' experience, and reduce the underuse of medications.

A 2014 study by University of Utah faculty, funded by the state of Utah, found that the rate of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) resulting from physician-dispensed drugs was equivalent to the rate resulting from pharmacist-dispensed drugs. The authors of the study concluded that "prescriber dispensing of [prescription] and [over-the-counter] drugs is firmly entrenched in the U.S. health care system, is likely to increase, does not appear to increase ADRs, and may reduce urgent care and emergency department visits." Physician dispense is not only safe, it also has the potential to increase medication adherence rates in Texas.

I am happy to answer any additional questions and thank you once again for your consideration of this bill. ★

David Balat is the director of the Right on Healthcare initiative with Texas Public Policy Foundation. With special expertise in healthcare finance, he is a former congressional candidate and a seasoned hospital executive with more than 20 years of healthcare industry leadership and executive management experience.