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Dear HHS committee,

If you support this budget as is, Mainers will suffer. Maine businesses will suffer, Maine employees will suffer, and the Maine people will suffer. The representatives that support this will lose the trust of their constituents.

There are a lot of assumptions being made behind this tax.

The assumption that the federal government will come through with funding at a time where they are allowing our processes and laws to be broken and ignored in the name of reducing spending.

The assumption that other pieces of legislation to help mitigate the damages that this tax will cause to Maine businesses will be approved.

The assumption that Mainers will continue to patron Maine pharmacies when there are alternative, out of state pharmacies that won't experience fallout from this tax.

The assumption that pharmacies can stay open when they have to pay out \$0.70 on every prescription when they already are dispensing at a loss.

Nationally pharmacy and healthcare advocates called for PBM reform, because the money that is in pharmacy is not in pharmacies. Maine pharmacies asked for a lifeline and have been met with a condemning tax.

This is an irresponsible, damaging proposal to a struggling industry. Maine is already suffering from a lack of pharmacies to provide healthcare to its people because pharmacy is not a profitable business. With current conditions, even big chains have posted notice of closing more pharmacies in Maine.

Please consider this example of harm the tax could cause, in basic terms, if none of those assumptions play out favorably for pharmacy businesses and the tax is assessed on top of current operations:

In the pharmacy I work at we fill about 200 prescriptions per DAY. We receive 20 hours of tech help for that work, or 2 employees working 10 hours each. If our technicians are being paid just over minimum wage (they are actually being paid much more for their skilled service), let's say \$15 per hour, that is \$300 spent by the pharmacy on payroll for that 1 DAY. If there's now an additional \$0.70 per prescription that needs to be paid, at 200 prescriptions, the pharmacy now has to take money from somewhere to budget for \$140 a DAY. This equates to the pharmacy losing half of their technician budget, which is one whole employee's hours. The pharmacy now has to terminate a Maine worker's position. This doesn't even account for the fact that technicians should be making more than minimum wage for their skills. Now, in this example, my pharmacy has terminated a technician, the remaining technician now has to try to keep up with double the workload. There are many ways that this could play out for the business, but all lead to patients suffering. Longer wait times, potential increase for medication errors due to overworked staff, or ultimately the pharmacy finding the new conditions unsustainable and closing up shop which decreases access to healthcare.

Is the loss of jobs, Mainers' access to healthcare, and the trust of your constituents something you're willing to support?

I beg you to vote against this budget proposal.

Respectfully,

Lori Wood, PharmD, RPh