

February 12, 2025

Senator Margaret Rotundo, Chair
Representative Drew Gattine, Chair
Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee

Senator Henry Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members of the Health and Human Services Committee

RE: Testimony IN OPPOSITION - LD 210, Language Part "SS" Establishes a \$0.70 cents per pharmacy prescription assessment on pharmacy providers.

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee

My name is Sara Lane, and I am the Manager of Pharmacy Clinical Services at Hannaford Supermarkets. I have been practicing pharmacy for 12 years and I reside in Sidney. I am submitting testimony in opposition of LD 210, part SS which establishes a \$0.70 cent per pharmacy prescription assessment on pharmacy providers.

Hannaford operates 60 pharmacies in Maine, from Aroostook to York counties. These pharmacies fill approximately 5 million prescriptions annually for Maine people – many of whom are elderly and/or live in rural areas with already limited healthcare access. I lead a team of pharmacists whose main role is to call patients, primarily the elderly, to help ensure adherence to medications, be available to answer questions, and facilitate communication with their prescriber's office. These services are critical to not only the personal well-being of these individuals, but to our communities as a whole.

It is our understanding that this \$0.70 cent assessment comes without assurance that all pharmacies will be made whole. This is very concerning. The pharmacy business is already under immense pressure. We operate on margins like every other business, based on specific reimbursement and cost factor models. As it currently stands, retail pharmacies and other health care providers struggle with low reimbursement rates from both public and private payors. We fill prescriptions every day where we do not recoup the cost of the drug, let alone enough money to cover associated supplies or labor. Adding to these pressures is increasing competition from online pharmacies, who will avoid this tax.

Community pharmacies play a vital role in the health of Mainers. Our pharmacists are experienced and trusted health care professionals who are committed to providing knowledgeable, compassionate care to their communities. They are the most accessible part of a patient's healthcare team, providing critical medication and professional expertise seven days a week.

According to the Maine Medical Association a tenth of all pharmacies in Maine have closed over the last decade. The decline has been steeper in rural areas, including Washington County where there's been a 31% decline in the number of open pharmacies and only 16% of the population lives within a 15-minute drive of a pharmacy. This is a frightening trend.

Hannaford remains committed to serving our communities by providing essential healthcare and medications, administering vaccinations and ensuring patient health. This proposal jeopardizes our ability to do so, and I urge lawmakers to reconsider this plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sara Lane