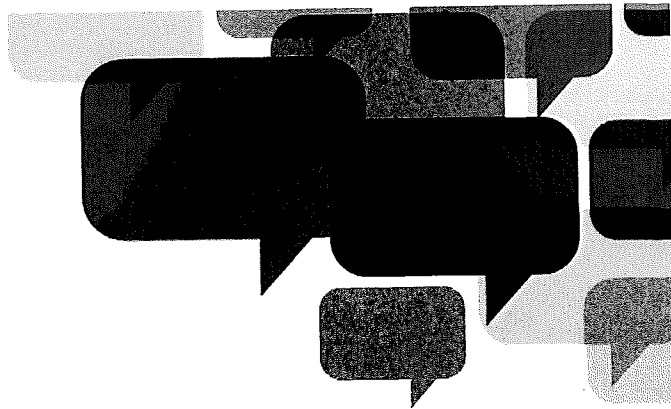




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February 12, 2025

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 per 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 Curtis Picard, and I serve as the President and CEO of the Retail Association of Maine. Our association represents retailers of all sizes, but within our membership, we have a number of retail pharmacies as members. We are here today advocating on behalf of our pharmacy members, advocating for these important health care providers and the critical role pharmacists play in delivering patient care. Today, I am here to voice strong opposition to LD 210, specifically Language Part "SS," which proposes a \$0.70 per-prescription assessment on pharmacy providers.

While we support efforts to improve MaineCare reimbursement, funding this initiative through a tax on pharmacies is a flawed and dangerous approach that directly impacts the pharmacy members we represent and, ultimately, the patients they serve. Pharmacists are the frontline healthcare providers ensuring that patients receive the medications and counseling they need. However, this proposed tax creates an unfair burden that could lead to reduced pharmacy hours, service cutbacks, or even closures—disrupting essential care for patients across the state.

Many pharmacies already operate on razor-thin margins, and this tax threatens to accelerate the decline of community pharmacies, particularly in rural areas where access to care is already limited. The closure of any pharmacy doesn't just affect the business—it impacts the pharmacists employed there, their ability to provide patient care, and the health outcomes of their communities.

Furthermore, the state's argument that increased MaineCare reimbursements will offset this tax "in the aggregate" is highly problematic. Pharmacists serving diverse patient populations—including those covered by Medicare, private insurance, or who pay out of pocket—will be unfairly penalized. There is no assurance that the offset will be equitable across all pharmacies, and those that serve a lower proportion of MaineCare patients could be placed at a severe financial disadvantage.

Additionally, there is no certainty that the anticipated federal matching funds will materialize. If they fall short, the financial burden will be placed squarely on the shoulders of pharmacies and the pharmacists working tirelessly to support patient care. The risk is too high, and the consequences are too severe for both the profession and the communities that Maine's pharmacists serve.

Pharmacists are critical healthcare providers, and policies that put their workplaces at risk ultimately put patient care at risk. We strongly urge you to reject this proposal and work toward solutions that strengthen, rather than undermine, the profession of pharmacy in Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Curtis Picard, CAE
President and CEO