



Penobscot Community
Health Care

State of Maine | 132nd Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services
Testimony of Paul Morrow Jr, PharmD on behalf of Penobscot Community Health Care
February 10, 2026

In Support Of:

LD 2071, An Act to Expand Access to Vaccines Approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration by Allowing Pharmacists to Prescribe, Dispense and Administer Vaccines and Require Insurance Coverage

and

LD 2146, An Act to Increase Access to Critical Vaccinations

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee:

I am Paul Morrow, Jr., PharmD, Pharmacy Manager for Brewer Medical Center Pharmacy at Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC), one of Maine's 20 community health centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and part of the largest independent primary care network in the state.

PCHC is Maine's largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), serving about 55,000 patients with locations in Penobscot, Waldo, and Somerset Counties. We provide high quality integrated primary care – including mental health services, pediatrics, dental care, care management and treatment for substance use disorder—at 22 clinical service sites, regardless of a patient's ability to pay. We have four community pharmacies, a robust primary care pharmacy service, and a long-standing pharmacy residency program, with pharmacists working at the top of their licenses as an integral part of the primary care team. Our pharmacists play an important role in management of chronic disease states, providing medication management, immunization guidance, recommendations and administration, med reconciliation, assessment and reduction of poly-pharmacy, Hep B and Hep C treatment, connection to HIV treatment, and more.

We support LD 2071, An Act to Expand Access to Vaccines Approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration by Allowing Pharmacists to Prescribe, Dispense and Administer Vaccines and Require Insurance Coverage. In conjunction with LD 2071, we also support LD 2146, which also seeks to improve access to pharmacist administered vaccines through other avenues.

Pharmacists in Maine have had the authority to administer vaccines since 2009. In that time, as a group among the most the accessible and trusted healthcare professionals, pharmacists have been a key driver on significantly increasing vaccination rates through advocacy, education, and direct immunization. In 2023, the IQIVA Institute for Human Data Science published data on vaccines administered in pharmacy settings compared to



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non-pharmacy medical settings and found that from 2018 to 2022, the percentage of adult vaccines administered in pharmacy settings jumped from roughly 54% to 86% and from 62% to 89% in urban and rural areas respectively. This represents a significant increase in the reliance on pharmacists to deliver vaccinations. The current proposal to expand access to immunizations through pharmacists serves to strengthen public health and enhance the ability for patients to protect themselves, family, and friends from illness and transmission from infections through life saving vaccines.

Pharmacists have the knowledge and training to work with patients who are wishing to seek protection from vaccines to make clear, practical recommendations through evidenced-based guidance. To administer vaccines in the State of Maine, a pharmacist must obtain a separate license over and above their pharmacist's license. To be eligible for this license a pharmacist must go through a comprehensive course of study that is now included in standard pharmacy education, or if the pharmacist is already licensed, an approved comparable 20-hour course approved by the Board of Pharmacy must have been satisfactorily completed within 3 years of application for licensure to administer vaccinations. In addition, as part of their annual continuing education requirement any pharmacist licensed to administer vaccinations must complete a minimum of 2 hours of continuing education over material covering immunizations.

The current framework authorizing pharmacists to administer immunizations through either provider issued prescriptions or vaccine standing order presents a constraint on pharmacists that can either delay or prevent access entirely to potentially life-saving vaccinations. Pharmacists are already utilizing their education and experience to make appropriate clinical and professional judgements surrounding vaccine eligibility and administration. In my daily practice, providers regularly seek my guidance on vaccine recommendations prior to issuing a prescription for a vaccine that I will ultimately administer. Standing orders present an unnecessary administrative barrier to pharmacist led immunizations and serves as a redundancy when pharmacists are already utilizing their professional experience in determining the appropriateness of a vaccine independent of any standing order. Removing these barriers and allowing pharmacists to not only administer but prescribe and dispense vaccines maximizes the utilization of experience and capability of pharmacists and patients accessibility to essential healthcare.

Accessibility to healthcare is a challenge faced throughout all of America. As a largely rural state, Maine residents encounter this challenge to an even larger extent in which some patients are required to drive hundreds of miles to simply meet their basic healthcare needs. Even in more populated areas, the lack of accessible primary care services presents a significant barrier without regard to distance or cost. A Bangor Daily News article in January 2026 highlights these challenges finding that in the Greater Bangor area, local healthcare organizations are reporting waitlists over 1,000 people with some patients having to wait six months or more to just establish primary care services. Due to difficulties in provider recruiting and retention, particularly at the state level but also across the country, this is not a problem that will be resolved quickly and may even worsen before improving.

Pharmacists play a vital role as part of the glue creating continuity of care in the primary care setting. This legislation would have a tremendously positive impact on patients and their health as well as overall public



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health by avoiding delays and reducing restrictions for patients seeking essential vaccinations, particularly in the patient population with no or limited access to primary care services. Ensuring pharmacists can more efficiently provide vaccinations will improve the ability to fill the gaps in primary care, increase vaccination rates, and thereby reduce mortality from preventable disease at a crucial time.

In consideration of your constituents that often already have limited resources concerning access to local quality health care, I urge you to vote for this proposal to expand access to FDA approved vaccines through enhanced pharmacist capabilities to prescribe, dispense and administer immunizations.

On behalf of Penobscot Community Health Care, thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at paul.morrow@pchc.com with any follow up questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul J. Morrow, Jr." The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Respectfully," salutation.

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