

August 10, 2017

The Honorable Katherine Clark
House of Representatives
1415 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
House of Representatives
1113 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Clark and Congressman Mullin,

We write to thank you for your leadership on the Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act and urge your colleagues in Congress to support this vital legislation. The opioid crisis is devastating families and communities from coast to coast. In 2015, more than 33,000 Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control, died as a result of the crisis, a number that is only growing.

A number of approaches have been summoned to attack this epidemic, but we believe that the use of already-existing electronic prescribing of controlled substances (EPCS) technology is going woefully underutilized. EPCS reduces opportunities for diversion, as the DEA-approved electronic prescribing process provides much more protection from diversion than the current system of paper and oral prescriptions. EPCS prescriptions cannot be altered, cannot be copied, and are electronically trackable. Furthermore, the federal DEA rules for EPCS establish strict security measures, such as two-factor authentication, that reduce the likelihood of fraudulent prescribing. Additionally, electronic prescribing offers new dimensions of safety and security for controlled substance prescriptions. A more streamlined EPCS system could significantly stem the loss of lives and help keep our medical records up-to-date

Over the past few years, the private sector has dramatically improved its use of E-Prescribing. In its 2016 National Progress Report, health information network Surescripts says that 73 percent of all prescriptions in the U.S. are now completed electronically. While in 2013, 1 billion prescriptions were e-prescribed, in 2016, 1.6 billion prescriptions were e-prescribed. Yet, despite this vast growth, EPCS is lagging behind the broader e-prescribing effort. While approximately 90 percent of non-controlled substances are e-Prescribed, only 14 percent of prescriptions for controlled substances are submitted electronically.

The Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act promotes the use of EPCS to help address the opioid crisis by requiring that Medicare Part D controlled substances are prescribed electronically. This connection will save lives, encourage wider adoption of EPCS, help curtail “doctor shopping”, and reduce costs for the federal government.

Six states (New York, Maine, Virginia, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Rhode Island) have already passed legislation to mandate EPCS in order to rein in the improper acquisition of opioids. These states now have a significantly more secure process in place or in the works. The system provides security and convenience from start to finish: from the doctors’ electronic prescription-writing process to the pharmacy dispensing medications to the patient. By keeping paper prescriptions and doctors’ credentials out of the hands of dealers and people suffering from substance use disorder, lives will be saved.

A national bill such as the one you have proposed would make available the promise of EPCS to the entire country and mark a significant step forward in the fight against the opioid crisis. Your bill would help fill a critical gap in the current prescription drug distribution chain and should be supported by all those seeking to tackle the epidemic gripping our country.

We thank you for your critical leadership with the Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act. We encourage your colleagues to cosponsor the bill and ensure its speedy passage in both chambers of Congress.

Sincerely,

National Association of Chain Drug Stores
CVS Health
Walgreens
Express Scripts
Surescripts
Prime Therapeutics
Imprivata
Pharmaceutical Care Management Association