



**Statement of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores to the Illinois Senate Health Committee: the Critical Role of Retail Pharmacies in Supporting Public Health Efforts to Provide COVID-19 Vaccinations
February 11, 2021**

Retail pharmacies continue to play a central role in federal, state and local efforts to address critical public health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and to aid in the nation’s response and recovery efforts, including stepping in to accelerate access to the COVID-19 vaccine for priority populations and the broader public.

Accessible in communities across the state of Illinois and long trusted by patients to efficiently and safely provide vaccine services – as evidenced by the over 11.7 million vaccines administered to Illinois residents at local pharmacies since 2015 – the nearly 1550 chain pharmacies throughout the state and their staff are working tirelessly to meet the public’s vaccines needs in this critical time. Given that ninety percent of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy, leveraging retail pharmacy vaccine providers in this regard is critical to expanding the reach of public health.

From the early days of the pandemic, retail pharmacies have worked to cultivate public-private partnerships with public health and policymakers so that when the time came, local pharmacies could help in state and local efforts to provide more timely vaccine access to the public.¹ Retail pharmacies have since ramped up healthcare operations to build and execute an array of COVID-19 vaccination models (in-store, mass stations, mobile clinics et al) concurrent with providing other critically needed health services. These efforts are supported by robust infrastructures from inventory management, storage and handling, online eligibility and appointment scheduling tools to detailed data reporting to states and the federal government.

With keen focus on the endeavor ahead, the retail pharmacy community stands ready to be fully deployed to safely, swiftly and equitably deploy COVID-19 vaccine services to communities throughout Illinois consistent with available vaccine stock. Especially among populations at increased risk of COVID-19 and its complications, fully leveraging retail pharmacies in local community COVID-19 vaccination program rollouts will serve to amplify mass vaccination efforts. Notably, in a poll conducted by *Morning Consult*, 66% of Black Americans and 72% of Hispanics trust pharmacists to provide COVID-19 vaccines.² Further, this opinion research suggests that for many in these communities the pharmacy itself may be preferred over mass vaccination sites, and that mass vaccination sites would do well to include local healthcare professionals such as trusted pharmacists.

As lawmakers learn and consider the experiences of the public health community and its partners following today’s hearing on the important topic of COVID-19 vaccines, we urge your support for any efforts to fully leverage retail pharmacy vaccine providers to accelerate and enhance state efforts to vaccinate the public against COVID-19.

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. In the state of Illinois, NACDS members operate nearly 1550 pharmacies and employ nearly 6500 pharmacists that provide critical patients care services across the state. Throughout the

¹ Serving the Greater Good. Public Health & Community Pharmacy Partnerships. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Health Security, October 2017, available at https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/our-work/pubs_archive/pubs-pdfs/2017/public-health-and-community-pharmacy-partnerships-report.pdf.

² This poll was conducted by Morning Consult and commissioned by the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. It was conducted between August 13-August 16, 2020 among a national sample of 2,200 Adults. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of Adults based on gender, educational attainment, age, race, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

country, chains operate nearly 40,000 pharmacies, and NACDS' 80 chain member companies include regional chains, with a minimum of four stores, and national companies. Chains employ nearly 3 million individuals, including 155,000 pharmacists. They fill over 3 billion prescriptions yearly, and help patients use medicines correctly and safely, while offering innovative services that improve patient health and healthcare affordability. NACDS members also include more than 900 supplier partners and over 70 international members representing 21 countries.

Please visit nacds.org.