

January 29, 2018

Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Costa and Honorable Members of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee,

Good Morning, my name is Bryan Lowe, I am the Director of State Government Affairs for the Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA). I am here to testify in support of an amendment to SB 1019 that would allow pharmaceutical and medical supply companies to deliver lifesaving medicines and medical supplies to Pennsylvania's healthcare facilities in the event of a state of emergency. In the past, during many disaster events across the nation, HDA member companies have experienced challenges when attempting to deliver medicines to hospitals, long term care facilities and other provider settings. Wholesale distribution of medical supplies and medicines are often an overlooked necessity when disaster preparedness/response plans are being set forth. The proposed amendment to SB 1019 does nothing more than ensure planners take such vital distribution needs into consideration.

HDA is the national trade association representing primary pharmaceutical wholesale distribution companies. Primary distributors represent a vital link within the healthcare supply chain, connecting over 12,300 pharmacy and provider settings throughout Pennsylvania to medications and healthcare products necessary to serve their patients daily. Wholesale distributors purchase pharmaceutical products from manufacturers and store, handle, pick, pack and ship those products, delivering them to virtually every pharmacy setting in the country. HDA members operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, out of more than 200 warehouses across the nation. Each day, HDA members distribute approximately 15 million products to keep healthcare and dispensing facilities well stocked with their needed products. Our industry is built on the model that if a healthcare provider places an order for a needed medication this afternoon, they will likely receive the product by the time they open tomorrow. Obviously during disaster events this real-time service is more vital than ever and therefore we strongly support the provisions of SB 1019 as amended.

When disasters occur, it is critical that pharmaceutical wholesale distributors have the ability to quickly deliver pharmaceuticals during a declared state of emergency. Pharmaceutical distributors' vehicles are often denied access to critical care areas during emergencies in part, because they are not considered essential personnel by local, state, or federal officials enforcing emergency restrictions. However, the products they are transporting can literally impact the outcome of life or death scenarios. Our proposed amendment would ensure that pharmaceutical distributors have similar access to roads as emergency vehicles – while working closely with emergency response personnel. Let me be clear, our intent is not to circumvent state or local emergency response personnel or law enforcement. We only wish to ensure that such entities planning take the distribution of medically necessary products into consideration and ensure that all such personnel are aware that suppliers are able to access healthcare facilities.

Most hospitals and pharmacies manage their inventory on a "just-in-time" modeling, meaning that they place their orders on a daily basis, as needed upon patient need or prescription. That type of modeling requires daily, and on time delivery in order to maintain their vital inventory of necessary medical products. Pharmaceutical Wholesale Distribution Centers contain an extensive inventory of pharmaceutical products and medical supplies and deliver to these hospitals and pharmacies, daily.

Further, pharmaceutical wholesale distributors make deliveries to alleviate product shortages due to normal usage and based on unexpected needs that may have arisen due to an emergency – when such supplies are exhausted quickly. By allowing distributor vehicles access to hospitals, pharmacies and long-term care centers after a declared emergency, you as lawmakers are helping to alleviate potential drug shortages and delays in care.

HDA is asking that pharmaceutical and medical supply delivery trucks be classified as essential vehicles with authority to make deliveries during a state of emergency. Further, HDA requests that appropriate local and state agencies include pharmaceutical and medical supply distributors in any emergency preparedness plan and establish a process to assist with road access during states of emergency. Finally, in the Governor's state of emergency declaration, we are asking the governor to include pharmaceutical and medical supply delivery trucks to access roads, bridges and other thoroughfares during states of emergency. We wish to have these requests granted while working entirely collaboratively with federal, state, and local emergency agencies.

HDA respectfully requests that you support the inclusion of an amendment to allow pharmaceutical and medical supply trucks classified as essential vehicles during a state of emergency. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have and please feel free to contact me at bwlowe@hda.org should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Bryan Lowe
Director, State Government Affairs