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May 13, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of the New York State Council of Health-system Pharmacists and the approximately 2,000 pharmacists we represent, we ask you to enact an Executive Order to allow pharmacists to administer all FDA-authorized vaccines recommended by CDC to adults and adolescents during the current crisis.

As our State grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hard to believe that pharmacists in New York State will not be able to help our communities by administering a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available. Despite ~13,000 pharmacists certified as immunizers, New York State is an outlier among states by not authorizing pharmacists to be able to administer all vaccines recommended by the CDC. Not only would this prohibit pharmacists from administering a potential COVID-19 vaccine, it also prohibits pharmacists from administering the Hepatitis A vaccine, Hepatitis B vaccine, MMR vaccine, HPV vaccine or Varicella vaccine.

All but 3 states (NY, WV, NH) allow the pharmacist to administer all of these vaccines. The disparity causes confusion for patients, providers and pharmacists. Since pharmacists are the most accessible health professionals, allowing pharmacists the able to immunize against vaccine-preventable diseases – in a similar fashion to almost every other state – will best ensure New Yorkers are protected. This is particularly true during a pandemic when many New York residents are afraid or unable to go a primary care office or clinic to get vaccinated.

Another barrier is the rule that requires a patient-specific or non-patient specific order from a provider in that county or adjoining county. This restricts access to vaccines, in the areas (mostly upstate) with low adult immunization rates and which are considered medically underserved. New York also prohibits pharmacists from administering vaccinations (besides against influenza) to adolescents. This is a key demographic that pharmacists could immunize, providing much needed relief to an overextended and less accessible health care system. Both of these restrictions are serious impediments to vaccination efforts, especially during a pandemic.

Widespread vaccination against COVID-19 will be essential to ending this pandemic. Additionally, maintaining and increasing vaccinations rates for other diseases during this time will be vital to relieving pressure on our health care system. We urge you to enact an Executive Order to allow pharmacists to administer all authorized vaccines recommended by CDC and eliminate the county rule during this emergency. This will ensure access to a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available and expand access to other critical immunizations to prevent disease in New York State as we fight to bring this pandemic under control. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shaun Flynn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shaun Flynn  
Executive Director