

February 13, 2020

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly:

On behalf of the thousands of Coloradans represented by the advocacy groups who have signed the attached letter, we strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 119 - Expand Canadian Prescription Drug Importation Program, a bill that will negatively affect our state and patients. Importing prescription drugs from other countries that do not hold the same standards as the U.S., will expose our residents, and your constituents, to dangerous unregulated medicines.

As stated in the attached letter, states have tried unsuccessfully to implement drug importation policies in the past. Last year, Senate Bill 5 - Wholesale Importation of Prescription Drugs from Canada, passed out of the legislature, with a \$3 Million fiscal note, but the state is still months away from sending their implementation proposal to the Federal Government for approval. This leads us to ask why we are trying to expand a program that has yet to be implemented, and is likely to be costly, as well as dangerous?

Major concerns still remain, of most significance, our state regulators have yet to develop a system to verify the safety of medicines imported to Colorado through other countries.

We urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 119. We currently have no way to distinguish legally-imported drugs from deadly counterfeits. We need to be able to depend on you, our state's decision makers, to put a stop to expanding legislation that puts the safety of Coloradoans at risk.

Sincerely,

Coalition of Hematology and Oncology Practices
Colorado BioScience Association
Colorado Competitive Council
Colorado Gerontological Society
Colorado State Grange
Let's Talk About Change, LLC
Jefferson County Business Lobby
Jefferson County Economic Development Corporation
International Cancer Advocacy Network
PRO 15
Prostate Conditions Education Council
Rocky Mountain Stroke Center
SURVIVEIT
Voices for Awareness Foundation
Young People in Recovery



April 30, 2019

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly:

We are deeply invested in the health of Colorado residents and recognize the need for Colorado patients to have access to low cost medicine. We are writing, however, to urge legislators to oppose a proposal that could have negative unintended consequences for the state and for patients: Senate Bill 5 Wholesale Importation of Prescription Drugs from Canada. More than a decade of experience shows that importing drugs will expose patients to dangerous, unregulated medicines.

States have tried unsuccessfully to implement drug importation in the past. Between 2004 and 2009, Illinois ran a program called I-SaveRx, which purported to license foreign online pharmacies in “safe countries” to dispense medicines to patients in Illinois and four other states. In 2006, the Illinois Auditor General reported that 40% of the required pharmacy inspections had not been completed, and only 11% of inspection records indicated whether a pharmacy had been approved. Moreover, the state did not monitor whether prescriptions were being filled only by approved pharmacies. Before the program folded in 2009, 5,000 patients received drugs from these pharmacies whose safety was entirely unclear.

Minnesota, too, ran into trouble with its state importation program. In a 2004 letter, the FDA cited the state’s own reports to explain that its program, Rx Connect, was “unsafe, unsound, and ill-considered.” Problems—even among members of the Canadian Internet Pharmacy Association—included lack of pharmacist oversight, shipping and storing drugs at unsafe temperatures, failure to label medicines, and dispensing “grossly improper amounts of medications.”

Evidence confirms that online foreign pharmacies are selling unsafe drugs.

In 2009, Colorado resident Ali Schroer ordered prescription antihistamine from a legitimate-looking foreign pharmacy at the suggestion of her physician. The counterfeit medication she received caused her months of migraines, stomachaches and gastrointestinal issues.

In 2014, the President of Maine's Pharmacy Association filled three prescriptions using CanadaDrugCenter.com and received medications that were not Canadian. Tests revealed that two of the drugs were not the correct strength, and one of them was contaminated.

Last year, subsidiaries of CanadaDrugs.com, a licensed Canadian pharmacy, pleaded guilty to selling American doctors \$78 million in unregulated cancer treatments, including counterfeits with no active ingredient. The unlucky cancer patients who received those drugs unknowingly went untreated. Since 2012, the FDA has warned more than 3,000 medical practices to stop buying drugs from similar unlicensed overseas wholesalers who have been caught selling counterfeit medicine at a discount. No one knows how many of these doctors' patients suffered ill-effects from non-FDA approved treatments.

Finally, drug importation is a poor use of state resources in a precarious safety climate. In 2018, Colorado reported finding counterfeit pills laced with synthetic opioids, and poisoning deaths associated with them. The prevalence and dangers of counterfeit medicines is continuing to grow. Some of these pills are made inside the U.S. or smuggled by cartels over borders, but they are also ordered online as finished products from overseas. If Colorado opens the state's drug supply to medicines from Canada, state regulators will need to create their own costly system to verify the safety of those medicines and distinguish legally-imported drugs from deadly counterfeits without the help of Federal authorities. Worse, they will have little recourse if foreign online pharmacies sell residents counterfeit medicines, like fentanyl-laced drugs.

Opening Colorado to medicines outside of the FDA secure supply chain carries significant risks. The effort to keep our residents safe will be expensive and labor intensive, and the cost of failure could be deadly. For these reasons, we urge you to seek other meaningful solutions to lower drug costs for Colorado patients.

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