



DATE: February 24, 2022

TO: Senator Rob Stafsholt, Chairman
Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues

FROM: Danielle Womack, Vice President of Public Affairs
Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin

SUBJECT: Support of Senate Bill 872

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony supporting Senate Bill 872. On behalf of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, we appreciate Senator Stafsholt and Representative Dallman's support of rural pharmacy practice.

Pharmacists play a unique role in healthcare teams as doctorally trained experts in medication management. Not only do pharmacists dispense prescription medications, but they also administer vaccinations, injectable medications such as those used for opioid use disorder, conduct comprehensive medication management, provide smoking cessation services, and order and interpret lab tests.

Upon graduation from pharmacy school, the average graduate has approximately \$180,000 in student debt. Unfortunately, due to the need to repay this debt, most new pharmacists choose to practice in urban or suburban areas, where salaries are often higher -- leading to a disproportionate lack of pharmacist providers in rural areas. In order to address this student loan debt and encourage new graduates to practice in rural and often underserved areas, SB 872 would provide ten recent graduates up to \$45,000 per year for two years if they commit to practicing in a medically underserved area for three years.

By promoting rural pharmacy practice through student debt grants, SB 872 will encourage pharmacists, with their extensive medication expertise, to serve in rural areas as part of the integrated healthcare team. Studies have shown that pharmacist interventions for patients with chronic conditions save an average of \$1,000 per patient per year -- if 10 pharmacists intervene for 45 patients each over two years, the investment of this bill will pay for itself.

By promoting pharmacist practice in rural areas, SB 872 will allow pharmacists to serve as patient care providers, improve patients' experiences and health outcomes, lower costs, and increase equity and access to care for Wisconsinites.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at dwomack@pswi.org.