NCAP Pharmacists Advocate for the Profession in a Successful Series of Meetings with Policy Makers

The NCAP had its most successful Legislative Advocacy effort yet during the week of July 20th. Dozens of NCAP members and pharmacy students engaged 16 key members of the NC General Assembly in discussions lasting an hour or more each.

The meetings served to educate key Health, Insurance, Regulatory and Commerce chairs on the practice of pharmacy and the headwinds it faces. The engagements also served to solidify our relationship with members – both Democratic and Republican – who are in positions to make important decisions about PBM practices, collaborative relationships, pay parity, Medicaid transformation and other issues of importance to our members.

In general, the discussions revolved around PBM, collaborative practice, pay parity, medication administration by pharmacists and Medicaid reform. NCAP members emphasized the roll that pharmacists can play in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that obstacles continued to hamper our efforts. The four issues discussed do not represent an exhaustive list of policy proposals that NCAP will bring to the General Assembly next session, but they are certainly central to the profession. Key takeaways from the meetings are:

- There is considerable support in both the House and Senate to enact PBM legislation next session. It did not happen this year because our PBM bill got held hostage to House-Senate politics.
- Legislators are very supportive of pharmacists being able to practice at the top of their license. They understand that current collaborative practice agreements and other restrictions do not allow that, and are sympathetic to making changes that will allow pharmacists to fully utilize their education, training and experience. They do not consider that issue a “scope of practice” problem.
Legislators told us that pharmacists who administer medications and perform other functions should be paid at the same rate as other health care providers.

GA members were very interested to hear about our concerns related to Medicaid transformation and how PBM’s might try to exploit that change to their benefit. Many of those we spoke with had not considered that aspect of the transformation and want further information on it.

There is a lot of support for local and independent pharmacies. Many legislators have relationships with local independent pharmacists.

Communications to legislators should focus on patient care and outcomes. Though they may be sympathetic, they do not respond as well to messaging that is focused on “protecting market share.”

We need to provide data to go along with our “anecdotal evidence.” Personal stories are good when they are supported by data that puts them in a larger context.

It is very important for pharmacists to consider financially supporting legislators who support them in policy making bodies. Legislators had a hard time understanding how it is that with over 12,000 pharmacists in the state our Political Action Committee has so little money.

NCAP legislative strategy and messaging will take its character in relation to who controls the General Assembly after the November election.

Zoom advocacy works pretty well. We engaged more members and for longer periods of time than we probably would have by going to the General Assembly in person. Something to think about as we consider future advocacy efforts.

Legislators asked us to send more information to them on all these issues and we will be doing so over the next couple of weeks as part of our process of building support for our 2021 agenda.

NCAP staff were outstanding and spared no effort to make last week a success. They worked long hours to connect our volunteers with the calls we had scheduled.

We all owe a debt of thanks to the NCAP members who gave generously of their time to engage these policy makers. And... pharmacy students really stepped up and were also well represented. The work of these individuals benefitted all pharmacists and should encourage more of our members to participate in future activities as well.


The Legislators they engaged were: Representatives Insko, Hurley, Meyer, Ross, Holley, White, Bumgardner, Sasser, Adcock. Senators Davis, Krawiec, Edwards, Rabon, Van Duyn, Perry and Chaudhuri.

A shout out to Mike James with Mutual Drugs, Bobby Rawls with Realo Discount Drugs and Ritesh Patel, Chair of our NCAP Independent Pharmacy Network for participating with all of us on the calls.
There were a couple of legislators who had to cancel at the last minute, and others who have scheduled with us for the second week of August. They are Reps. Lambeth and Howard and Senators Britt and Hise.

**Update from the General Assembly**

The General Assembly will come back into session on Sept. 2nd. They may come back earlier if Congress passes another COVID-19 relief bill and the State has to pass conforming legislation. The agenda in September will be very limited in scope, but our lobbyist is working with other organizations and will continue to try and advance our NCAP agenda at every opportunity.

**Planning for the 2021 Legislative Session.**

We want to thank you for responding to our call for input on the NCAP 2021 legislative agenda. We have heard from a number of our members who have had some interesting and thought provoking suggestions.

If you have thoughts on the agenda, please get in touch with me at the address below. I am collating the responses for a report to the NCAP advocacy committee.

With the Legislative Advocacy week behind us NCAP pivots to preparing for the 2021 session. We will update you in more detail soon; however, in brief, our preparation includes, but is not limited to:

- Collecting input from NCAP members on the legislative agenda.
- Advocacy committee meetings to sift through those suggestions and arrive at a tentative agenda for the full NCAP Board of Directors to approve.
- Communicating the finalized agenda to our
- Drafting of bills.
- Vetting our proposed legislation with partner and other organizations to obtain feedback.
- Finding sponsors and co-sponsors
- Educating General Assembly members and the Governor as to our proposals in order to gain support.
- NCAP advocacy efforts in support of the agenda. It will be important for NCAP pharmacists to engage their own legislators in support of the agenda.
- Media strategy to educate the public and raise public support for our agenda.
- Regional fund-raisers to support PILLPAC and the NCAP Advocacy Fund.

There is a lot of work to be done. Legislative success is determined largely by the work we do between now and January. NCAP members all have a role to play, so stay tuned for further updates as we finalize our strategic plans!
Important: Supporting Those Who Support Pharmacy

As noted above, one of the take-aways from our meetings with legislators is the need for pharmacists to support our other advocacy efforts with contributions to Political Action Committees.

The NCAP Advocacy Fund supports the “in-house” work of your lobbyist and grassroots initiatives by the Association. Donating to “PILLPAC” is the way that pharmacy can support current legislators who have supported us and elect individuals who will be good for the profession.

We plan on sponsoring a number of regional fundraisers as part of our overall strategic plan. You don’t need to wait for one of our events to contribute. You can do your part by contributing to the NCAP advocacy fund at https://secure001.membershipsoftware.org/NCAPsecure/donation_pay.asp Your contribution supports the work of your lobbyist and other in-house advocacy efforts at NCAP

NCAP is also joining in a collaborative effort with other pharmacists to raise advocacy funds and pool them to have greater impact. Your contribution to that effort is also greatly appreciated. You can support this effort by mailing a contribution to: PILL PAC: 209 Fayetteville Street: Raleigh, NC 27601

No amount is too small and every dollar counts.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of your voice and engagement as part of our efforts. Please take time to learn what you can do to ensure that policy makers hear your concerns and act to support your work.

We want to hear your thoughts on how we can be successful. Never hesitate to contact us with concerns, insights, or information that can be of use and which can enhance our efforts. Always feel free to contact me directly. My email is Solarigovernmentsolutions@gmail.com and my phone number is 919-744-8803. As your lobbyist I am happy to answer any questions you have about my work and I am ready to assist you in any way possible.