CICERO INSTITUTE

Pharmacists Can Fill the Doctor Shortage Gap in Maine

Due to high patient volume, doctors are often booked weeks or months in advance. Many are experiencing burnout and are unable to give patients the attention they may need.

This dire situation leaves many patients with a difficult choice:

Forego care altogether

—OR—

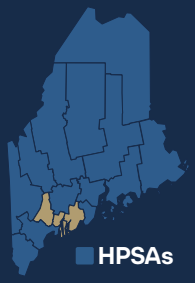
Choose higher-cost alternatives such as urgent care or the emergency room

By 2030, Maine is projected to be short 120 primary care physicians.

13 of Maine's 16 counties

are Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA).

Low-income citizens are disproportionately affected by these shortages.



HPSA designations indicate areas where there are **3,500 or more patients for every one provider**.

While pharmacists are an important part of the healthcare team with the extensive education and experience to help fill this gap, legislative and regulatory restrictions prevent them from doing so.

In Maine, there are

1,330 Pharmacists

2,300 Pharmacy Technicians

THE SOLUTION

Maine should immediately eliminate the red tape that prevents pharmacists from providing everyday healthcare services to their patients, as **Idaho**, **Iowa**, **Colorado**, and **Montana** have already done.

Patients consistently rank pharmacists as trusted healthcare providers. Allowing them to practice within the full scope of their training will dramatically expand healthcare access to the more than 90 percent of Americans who live within five miles of a community pharmacy—many of which are open on weekends and late at night.

WHY IT MATTERS

The United States is projected to be short more than 100,000 doctors by 2034, disproportionately affecting rural communities and creating more so-called "healthcare deserts." **Yet, the U.S. healthcare system is sidelining 330,000 pharmacists who are qualified to provide many medical services such as:**

Diagnose and manage chronic diseases and minor ailments

Test and treat based on the results of laboratory tests

Deliver preventative health services

Pharmacy-based point-of-care testing and treatment services provide prevention and early detection for common health conditions. They can treat and prescribe for minor ailments like urinary tract infections, cold and flu symptoms, or allergies. As highly accessible providers, pharmacists can even provide consistent treatment for chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, or asthma. This benefits Mainers now and in the long run.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Maine should immediately incorporate a standard of care that allows pharmacists to practice to the full extent of their education and training. Giving pharmacists the ability to deploy the full scope of their training and experience—especially in rural areas and healthcare deserts—is a safe and effective way to alleviate the pressure of doctor shortages