

Pharmacists Can Fill the Doctor Shortage Gap in Rhode Island

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, Rhode Island is projected to be **short 99 primary care physicians.**

Two of Rhode Island's five 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 Rhode Island, there are



1,290
Pharmacists



1,720
Pharmacy Technicians

THE SOLUTION

Rhode Island 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 Rhode Islanders now and in the long run.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Rhode Island 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