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July 17th, 2020

Sen. Steve Glazer, Chairman
Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee
State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, California 95814

Sen. Ling Ling Chang, Vice-Chairwoman
Senate Business, Professions, and Economic Development Committee
State Capitol, Room 4062
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: GHLF Patient Group Supports AB-1710

Dear Chairman Glazer and Vice-Chairwoman Chang:

On behalf of the millions of California residents living with chronic illness that we strive to advocate for at the Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF), we write to express our support for AB-1710 and we hope you support its passage through your committee.

By way of background, GHLF is a 501(c)(3) patient organization that aims to improve the quality of life for those living with chronic illness through cultivating community support, education, and advocacy. Over the past 21 years, our organization has reached millions of chronically ill patients coming from all walks of life who represent a variety of chronic disease populations including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, and migraine. As a patient advocacy organization for the chronically ill, we staunchly support all legislative efforts that work to improve the education, accessibility, and promotion of disease-preventing vaccinations.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to those with pre-existing chronic conditions because of their increased susceptibility to severe coronavirus infection. Vaccine accessibility is particularly important to this population because many people living with a chronic illness rely on vaccines to bolster their compromised immunity. There are also others within the population who, for medical reasons, cannot receive vaccinations and thus depend on “herd immunity” for indirect protection from vaccine-preventable diseases. Altogether, these are some of the most vulnerable who are most in need of a readily accessible COVID-19 vaccine. We support AB-1710 as it takes the next step in California’s healthcare policy and allows pharmacists to administer all FDA approved vaccinations, including the potential future COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of whether it has been recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Current California law allows pharmacists to administer many vaccinations, but they must wait for an ACIP recommendation first. While the ACIP review process is very thorough it can be lengthy, and it may create an unnecessary delay to making access to the potential COVID-19 vaccination as widespread as possible.

The pharmacy setting provides widespread commercial access to medical treatment in the form of prescription drugs without patients being limited by what insurance carrier they have, in-network and out-network distinctions, or other arbitrary means that typically reduce patient options for where they can receive care. With nearly 5,600 pharmacies distributed throughout the state, they have the potential to serve as a far more convenient medium for the administration of all vaccines than traditional primary care

clinic sites. And they have the potential to alleviate a possible overwhelming rush to physicians' offices once a vaccine is approved by providing another safe place for patients to receive a COVID vaccine.

The pandemic has already been an unfortunate lesson in what happens when public health systems lack the agility to take timely action to contain and mitigate disease spread. On top of that, we could be at risk for another disease outbreak as the pandemic has led to a steep decline in pediatric vaccinations with many school-aged children missing scheduled immunization due to quarantine. On behalf of the millions of California residents living with chronic illness who will be depending on vaccines and the immunity of others to maintain their health, we respectfully request the passage of Assembly Bill 1710 to allow for licensed pharmacists to administer all FDA approved vaccinations.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be please to provide any further information that you need for further consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Greenblatt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Corey Greenblatt
Manager, Policy and Advocacy
Global Healthy Living Foundation