



NewsRelease

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 9, 2009

Contact: Chrissy Kopple, NACDS
(703) 837-4266

Lisa Miller, NCPA
(703) 838-2682

As Congress Considers Economic Stimulus Bill, NACDS, NCPA Caution Against Provisions That Would Stifle HIT Adoption

Alexandria, Va. – Congress is developing a massive economic stimulus package that includes health information technology (HIT) provisions. The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) are urging caution to ensure that any approach to HIT does not include provisions that have been promoted in the name of privacy, but that are actually misguided in their approach and that could prevent the adoption of HIT.

NACDS and NCPA have been at the forefront of the e-prescribing movement since founding SureScripts (now SureScripts/Rx Hub) in 2001.

Among NACDS' and NCPA's concerns with any combined legislation is assuring that it does not interfere with pharmacies' operations and their ability to provide the communications necessary to ensure high quality patient care, while assuring adequate protections for protected health information (PHI). For example, so-called privacy provisions that have been proposed in the last Congress would stifle prescription refill reminders, which foster medication adherence. Another example is a proposed definition of "breach" of patient information that would disrupt efficiency throughout the entire healthcare system while not providing patients with truly meaningful privacy protections.

"HIT has the potential to save lives and improve the value of patient care," said NACDS President and CEO Steven C. Anderson, IOM, CAE, and NCPA CEO and Executive Vice President Bruce Roberts, R.Ph. "Not only can it improve patient outcomes, but in these economically challenging times, if implemented properly, HIT can produce cost-savings that benefit the entire healthcare system."

NACDS and NCPA recently signed onto a letter to House and Senate Leadership as members of the AMP Coalition, a group representing all segments of the prescription

drug delivery system, including drug manufacturers, wholesale drug distributors, chain and independent pharmacies, pharmacists and pharmacy benefit managers.

“We urge the inclusion of pharmacists and pharmacies as eligible entities for grant funding. Pharmacies must adopt health information technology to continue to meet consumers’ needs, but are challenged in finding the resources to do so,” the letter stated. “Pharmacists are the most readily-available health care resource for consumers, and should be allowed an opportunity to help shape national policy affecting health information technology.”

The letter continued, “Consequently, we believe it would be premature or even ill advised for Congress to attempt to legislate substantively in an area that remains highly contentious. We ask Congress to legislate at this time on economic stimulus related to HIT adoption, but to continue to hold hearings and engage in further discussions on issues related to privacy.”

#

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets, and mass merchants with pharmacies. Its more than 160 chain member companies include regional chains with a minimum of four stores to national companies. NACDS members also include more than 1,000 suppliers of pharmacy and front-end products, and 85 international members representing 28 countries. Chains operate 39,000 pharmacies, and employ a total of more than 2.5 million employees, including 118,000 pharmacists. They fill more than 2.5 billion prescriptions yearly, and have annual sales of over \$750 billion. For more information about NACDS, visit www.NACDS.org.

The National Community Pharmacists Association, founded in 1898, represents the nation’s community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 23,000 pharmacies. The nation’s independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains dispense nearly half of the nation’s retail prescription medicines. To learn more go to www.ncpanet.org.