

Support HB21-1275

Concerning Reimbursements for Pharmacists' Services Under the Medical Services Act
Sponsors: Reps. Lontine (D) and Will (R), Sens. Ginal (D) and Kirkmeyer (R)

This bill will help improve health outcomes and access to health care, address workforce shortage issues, and save taxpayer dollars across multiple intersecting systems.

Pharmacists are highly trained practitioners with advanced graduate degrees who practice in thousands of Colorado communities.

Long-acting injectable (LAI) medications, or extended-release injectables, can be used for individuals in recovery from serious mental illness or substance use conditions. Physicians (or appropriate staff) can administer these long-acting injectables who are then reimbursed through medical billing. However, some mental health centers and Federally Qualified Health Centers may not obtain LAI medications from a pharmacy because they are not covered under the pharmacy benefit. Thus, many mental health centers have had to use the "buy and bill" model, which requires the center to buy long-acting injectables at their own expense, then bill Medicaid for reimbursement. This has proven too expensive for some centers, especially those that do not have their own pharmacy, as changing prescriptions and patient-level variables lead to unused expensive medication.

Such challenges lead to difficult treatment decisions, where providers are forced to choose less effective alternative medications.

The Federally Qualified Health Center at the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless is unable to administer a long-acting injectable to its population at all, even though they have a pharmacy. They must transport the individual to Denver Health to administer this medication and then transport the individual back to the shelter. This is costly, inefficient, and a barrier to quality care.

Long-acting injectable medications reduce life-threatening mental health symptoms and stabilize patients for prolonged periods of time. They also increase medication adherence, leading to improved quality of life and reductions in disruptive and costly life events such as emergency room visits, hospitalization, and incarceration for mental health-related crimes.

HB21-1275 would:

- Improve access to evidence-based treatment involving long-acting injectable medications.
- Require that a pharmacist receives reimbursement under the medical assistance program for providing services authorized in statute.
- Address a reimbursement disparity and state that reimbursement must be equivalent to that provided to a physician or advanced practice nurse for the same services rendered.
- Ensure that reimbursement includes services delivered by a pharmacist through telemedicine.
- Allows a pharmacist, or pharmacy, with authority to administer LAI medications to seek reimbursement for those treatments under the medical assistance program as either a pharmacy benefit or as a medical benefit.

Supporters:

