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Testimony re: HB 2157
Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee
Submitted by John Monroe
On Behalf of the Kansas Association of Chain Drug Stores

Chairman Carpenter, Vice Chair Bryce, Ranking Member Ruiz, and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Monroe, and I appear today on behalf of the Kansas Association of Chain Drug Stores (KACDS), which represents chain pharmacy operators across Kansas. Our member pharmacies employ more than 32,000 Kansans and operate over 500 pharmacy locations statewide, serving both urban and rural communities. KACDS is here today in strong support of HB 2157, legislation that would expand pharmacists' scope of practice to include point-of-care testing and treatment for COVID-19 under a statewide protocol. Under current Kansas law, pharmacists are already authorized to test and treat influenza, streptococcal pharyngitis, and urinary tract infections. HB 2157 is a logical and natural next step to extend that same authority to COVID-19.

Community pharmacies play a critical role in healthcare access. Nearly 90 percent of Americans live within five miles of a pharmacy, and pharmacy locations are more prevalent than physician practices in many low-income and rural communities. Pharmacies are often open evenings and weekends, and many patients rely on pharmacies as their most accessible entry point into the healthcare system. Pharmacists are highly trained, trusted healthcare professionals who routinely serve as a first stop for patients seeking timely care. Allowing pharmacists to practice at the top of their education and training helps alleviate pressure on an already overextended primary care system while improving access to care close to home. This is especially important in rural communities where urgent care services may be nonexistent and same-day primary care appointments are often unavailable.

When Kansas adopted test-to-treat authority in 2022, the exclusion of COVID-19 was understandable due to federal emergency authorities in place at the time. Those federal authorities have since expired. Today, pharmacists no longer have the ability to test and treat COVID-19 under federal regulation, creating a gap in care that HB 2157 would appropriately address. Pharmacists have previously tested and treated COVID-19 safely and effectively under federal authority. HB 2157 is a common-sense, patient-centered update that aligns Kansas law with current diagnostic technology, federal realities, and real-world healthcare needs. By adding COVID-19 to the existing test-to-treat framework, the Legislature can strengthen access to timely care, particularly for rural Kansans, while reducing strain on the broader healthcare system.

On behalf of the Kansas Association of Chain Drug Stores, I respectfully urge your support of HB 2157. Thank you for your time and consideration.