Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a pharmacist with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

I am writing to ask for your support for legislation to be introduced during the upcoming legislative session that is of great concern to not only pharmacists but to the health and welfare of all our citizens.

The current COVID-19 crisis has further demonstrated the importance of utilizing all available resources in the effort to provide timely health care to everyone. Even before the advent of our current crisis, chronic diseases, increasing health care costs, and primary care and nursing shortages, as well as the shift to value-based, patient-centric care were all pointing to the need to expand the pool of healthcare professionals and to have those professionals practicing to the height of their licenses.

Today, many pharmacists are -- by education, training and experience -- able to administer medications, including injectable therapies. To take one example, mental health patients are already a vulnerable population.  Some mental health patients with psychotic disorders struggle to adhere to oral medications.  Many times, oral medication can be replaced by long-lasting anti-psychotic drugs administered by injection.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, psychiatric services, already greatly limited, have predominantly switched to Telehealth to provide ongoing assessment and counseling services.  In North Carolina, social distancing mandates have meant that many of the patients on long-acting injectable antipsychotics were being switched back to oral treatment options. This has created  a number of problems in patients that were previously stable, thanks to their monthly injections. This issue can be avoided by allowing pharmacists to help provide these injections. If pharmacists can immunize patients for a variety of other diseases --the skill set is the same--then why not have pharmacists provide other types of injections such as these long-acting antipsychotics.

Mental health is just one area in which pharmacists could play a key role in improving access to care and patient outcomes. Treatments and preventative medicines for AIDS and long-active contraceptives are two additional examples.

North Carolina is one of only 5 states (NC, NY, NH, MN, and KS) in the nation that does not give authority to pharmacists to administer medications.

The Centers for Disease Control, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative, the American Medical Society and many other organizations have recommended greater utilization of pharmacists in patient care and for removing unwarranted barriers or restrictions.

Passage of this legislation would help address our current COVID crisis as well as improve access to care and patient health over the long haul. Please lend your support to this measure when you are asked to vote on it.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,