

MICHIGAN PHARMACIST

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE MICHIGAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

— STUDENT FOCUS —

STRIDES FOR PHARMACY:

Student Pharmacists Broaden Engagement in Advocacy and Policy Reform



BY SHANNON HABBA,
Doctor of Pharmacy
candidate, class of 2025,
Wayne State University;
chapter president, APhA-
ASP

The Doctor of Pharmacy candidates of Wayne State University's (WSU) Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences have been equipped with the tools required to overcome adversity, despite the challenges presented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Pharmacists have emerged in the spotlight as healthcare providers, from leading the country's COVID immunization and testing efforts to obtaining the ability to prescribe Paxlovid under the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorization. As we transition to a hopeful post-pandemic era, the WSU American Pharmacists Association - Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP) and the Student Michigan Pharmacists Association (SMPA) student leaders are working diligently to keep students engaged in pharmacy advocacy and policy reform.

Every year, student pharmacists look forward to attending Pharmacy Day at the Capitol (PDAC), an event hosted by the Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA). PDAC gives pharmacy professionals across the state of Michigan the opportunity to speak with legislators on the value of our profession in healthcare and policies that affect pharmacy, including those that expand a pharmacist's scope of practice. As advocacy continues to be a top priority, student pharmacists from Wayne State University, Ferris State University and the University of Michigan returned to PDAC at the Capitol in Lansing in September 2021 for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began. For many students, it was their first time attending PDAC, speaking to a legislator or simply learning more about policies that influence the profession of pharmacy. As a result, collaboration with government officials through PDAC and other continued efforts led to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signing pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) reform into law; this is one of many great examples of how critical it is for pharmacy

professionals to partake in policy reform.

Unfortunately, student pharmacists did not have the opportunity to attend PDAC this year because it was canceled. Although PDAC has always been one of the most accessible methods of communicating with legislators, it surely is not the only one. Student pharmacists at WSU have set out to open alternative doors of engagement with their respective legislators to keep moving pharmacy forward and lead with the courage to change. Following the initiative of WSU's Omicron Chapter of Lambda Kappa Sigma (LKS), student pharmacists from WSU's chapters of APhA-ASP, SMPA and other pharmacy student organizations throughout the state plan to join the campaign efforts on House Bill 5655 (2021) – expanding the scope of pharmacists to prescribe and dispense certain contraceptives. The campaigning efforts include collaborating with other student pharmacists, calling legislators, writing letters and seeking additional means of educating others on the importance of such policies. Undoubtedly, the desired outcome is to see House Bill 5655 signed into law, but it is also desired that such campaign efforts can be reproduced by future pharmacy professionals on their journey to policy reform and advocacy.

Now with greater reason, student pharmacists and pharmacists need to amplify their voices and continue sharing their perspectives. PDAC is one channel of communication available to connect with public officials and include them on the journey to pharmacy advocacy, but there are several others to capitalize on as well. Pharmacy experts must continue to engage and educate other leaders and healthcare professionals on pharmacy's role in health care, as it is crucial to the advancement of medicine.



Wayne State University Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy faculty and students attend Pharmacy Day at the Capitol in September 2021.