



NATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF THE BLIND  
MINNESOTA

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February 29, 2024

The Honorable Senator Melissa H. Wiklund  
Health and Human Services Committee, Minnesota Senate  
2107 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Sweeping Exemptions in S.F. 2266 Exclude Many Blind People Whom the Bill is Meant to Serve

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota, I write to express our concerns regarding exemptions in S.F. 2266 that aims to provide accessible prescription labels to blind, low-vision, and disabled individuals.

We support legislative requirements for accessible prescription labels. Nonvisual access to information about effects and side effects, correct dosage, expiration, interaction of multiple medications, and the like is crucial for health and safety. We are, therefore, quite concerned that accessible labels would indeed not be required at many pharmacies. As defined in the bill, an "institutional pharmacy" is any pharmacy that "is part of or is operated in conjunction with" a long list of types of healthcare facilities. If a pharmacy is conveniently located in the same building with a hospital or other healthcare provider where a person has been prescribed medication, the individual wouldn't have a right to nonvisual access to the drug label. Several members reported that they were unable to leave hospitals until their prescriptions were filled. Under this legislation, it appears those patients would be forced to use pharmacies that may not be equipped or required to provide the needed information in an accessible format.

While it may seem as though people at hospitals aren't responsible for their own medications, I have experienced evidence to the contrary. When I visit with my nephrologist at Mayo Clinic, they often prescribe medications that can be easily

filled at the hospital pharmacy downstairs. Furthermore, when I left the emergency room with a broken wrist ears back, I likewise went to a hospital pharmacy for my new prescription. I have learned alternative techniques to distinguish my pills from one another, but when blind and low vision individuals like me receive new prescriptions for the first time, this is the prime opportunity to ensure they know the name, strength, and instructions. The broad exemption takes away accessibility when many people need it most.

We know of other states (Maryland, for example) that have enacted comprehensive legislation on accessible prescription labels without carve-outs. We also recognize that some exemptions may potentially be reasonable and handled through a regulatory process. However, so that the intent of this legislation can be achieved, we urge you to amend the bill so that it is more universally applicable before it moves forward. Thank you for your consideration.

The National Federation of the Blind defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. Founded in 1920, we are the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Minnesotans with chapters and divisions across the state. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corbb O'Connor', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Corbb O'Connor, President  
National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota