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**S. 98 Testimony in the Senate Health & Welfare Committee on 2/2/24 on behalf of
Rutland Pharmacy (RP) and the Vermont Pharmacists Association (VPA)**

The RP and VPA generally support and applaud this bill's purpose to give the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) the statutory authority to comprehensively evaluate the cost of prescription drugs in Vermont. The political autonomy and expertise of the GMCB is a good fit for this undertaking and in terms of statutory 'role clarity', RP and VPA hold that this step is welcome and long overdue, as for years there has been a lack of clarity as to which party in government was squarely in charge of working to make prescription drugs more affordable in Vermont. RP and VPA, with new data sharing protections recently passed into law by the VT Legislature, and their financial and clinical provider experience and expertise, look forward to helping the GMCB and the Prescription Drug Affordability Stakeholder Advisory Council in any way they can to reduce prescription drug costs and associated pricing processes, and to improve access to high quality care for all Vermonters.

More specifically, we think that the scope of the bill need not be limited solely to "high-cost" prescription drug products as the reasons for high costs is embedded in a current delivery system that perpetuates them, without analytically getting at the root cause(s), as we all watch premiums continue to go up year after year, while community pharmacies close and access to quality clinical pharmacy care is reduced. We hope that the GMCB be given the resources and authorized to do the analytical work first and then make "any recommendations for further legislative action needed to make prescription drug products more affordable in this State" (Please see S. 98 Sec. 9375(b)(16) (B)(iii)) before any upper payment limits, or other fixed pricing or reimbursement methodologies, are instituted that unintentionally and potentially further exacerbates a stressed pharmaceutical financial and clinical care delivery system in Vermont.