



**New York State Association of  
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**Memorandum in Support of S. 5000/A. 7342**

*An Act to amend the public health law and the education law in relation to prescription forms and labels, interpretation services and patients with limited English proficiency*

The New York State Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NYSAAAA) supports S. 5000 sponsored by Senator Kemp Hannon and A. 7342 sponsored by Assemblyman Richard Gottfried. This critical legislation would significantly improve the health and safety of all New Yorkers by ensuring that all patients across New York can understand their prescription information. Specifically, the bill would authorize the State Board of Pharmacy to create standardized prescription label instructions, require chain pharmacies to provide translation and interpretation services for limited English proficient (LEP) patients, and facilitate communication between physicians and pharmacies regarding a patients' preferred language.

Every New Yorker should have the opportunity to understand his or her prescription medication labels. It is often challenging for individual patients to understand and act correctly on just one prescription instruction. For those who take multiple medications, such as the elderly, this challenge is even greater. Age-related declines in vision, memory and cognitive skills means that small print and cluttered labeling are particularly problematic for the elderly. Similarly, for the over 2.4 million LEP New Yorkers, the lack of translation makes labels literally incomprehensible.

The consequences of misunderstanding prescription labels can be dire and costly. Unintended misuse of prescription medications causes over one million yearly "adverse drug events," resulting in visits to the emergency room, hospitalization and, in some cases, even death. The solutions to this serious health problem are simple, inexpensive, and efficient for pharmacies to implement. Creating easy-to-understand, standardized prescription labels, and providing that information in a patient's language, can significantly improve health outcomes.

The proposed legislation gives New York, and New York's chain pharmacies, the opportunity to be industry leaders in not only curbing unnecessary medical costs, but also in ensuring that all patients, including the elderly and patients who are LEP, can understand their prescription drug labels. As New York seeks ways to spend money more wisely while improving health care, enacting A7342 and S5000 is a practical way to increase access to and improve the quality and safety of health care for all New Yorkers.

For these reasons, NYSAAAA supports the bill.

Sincerely,

Laura A. Cameron  
Executive Director