

## Pharmacist as provider status gains traction

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By [Aubrey Westgate](#)

The effort to secure provider status for pharmacists continues on a federal and state level, and it may be gaining more traction than ever.

During the October 27 presentation, "The Impact of Pharmacist as Provider Status," at the [Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy Nexus 2015](#) in Orlando, presenters Kristina Lunner, senior director of [Leavitt Partners](#), and Jeff Rochon, PharmD, CEO of the [Washington State Pharmacy Association](#), shared updates on how pharmacist as provider efforts are progressing.

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On the federal side, the "Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act," which was introduced in the House and Senate this year, is picking up steam, said Lunner. This bipartisan legislation would provide pharmacists in medically underserved communities with reimbursement for Medicare Part B services. The services covered would be driven by state practice laws, and reimbursement would be up to 85% of the Physician Fee Schedule.

Currently, more than 220 representatives and 30 senators are cosponsoring this legislation, said Lunner. "For within a year [since introduction], this is a really strong number of cosponsors, suggesting that there's a lot of interest in recognition ... and there's interest in moving it forward."

The [Patient Access to Pharmacists' Care Coalition](#), which Lunner serves as an adviser to, is working hard to ensure the legislation does indeed move forward.

The coalition was initiated just over a year ago by Walgreens and is comprised of 38 members. A handful of them are non-pharmacy specific, such as the Healthcare Leadership Council, the National Consumers League, and the National Patient Advocate Foundation.

Though this is not the first coalition that has formed to support the pharmacist as provider movement, Lunner said it is the broadest. "We're feeling very hopeful because of the progress we're making," she said, noting that 230 cosponsors tends to be a "magic number" that signals legislation is likely to move forward.

On the Senate side, Lunner said the Senate Committee on Finance may take the bill into consideration as part of a package of other legislation under consideration.

Still, she acknowledged that the end of the year is quickly approaching and Congress has a lot of other legislation to review.

"Neither of these things are set in stone," she said. "... There's just a lot of moving parts and so, while we remain hopeful, we're also realistic about we may be looking at next year to move things forward."