THE ACCESSIBLE PRESCRIPTION BILL

Over half a million blind, low-vision, and print-disabled Ohioans are unable to read FDA-mandated prescription labels and prescription information sheets. The counseling provided by pharmacists at the window does not give the access to information needed at home by low-vision and blind consumers to manage their medications safely and independently as sighted people do by reading their prescription label information when they are in doubt. All consumers need access to the dosage, instructions, side-effects, contra-indications, and emergency/refill phone numbers provided by the legal label. Requiring the provision of accessible prescription labels would reduce the detrimental health consequences of medication errors and improve the safety and medication adherence of those with vision loss and print disabilities.

We ask you to support legislation that will require pharmacies to provide an accessible label to convey the information already required by law to be affixed to the container in which a dangerous drug is dispensed for a patient who is blind, low-vision, or otherwise print-disabled. The information to be conveyed audibly shall include any information required by federal and state laws, drug interactions, contra-indications, and side effects.

For more than 25 years, since the Americans with Disabilities Act went into effect, pharmacies have had the option to offer accessible labels as a voluntary accommodation to the blind and print-disabled. However, none provided them voluntarily. It did not begin to happen until various blind organizations requested structured negotiation to bring about compliance with the federal law. Even those pharmacies that do provide it often maintain a culture of non-compliance by not educating their pharmacists and not openly telling patients that the accommodation is available.

Several options are available to provide accessible prescription labels. Pharmacies are free to choose and develop any option that complies with the law. The US Access Board best practices were specifically designed to assist pharmacies in developing solutions to the accessibility issue. The ADA specifically states that consumers can specify their preferred format of accommodation to assist the pharmacist in determining the most effective means of communicating the required information. These formats can include audible, large print, or Braille.

Assuring equal access to services and information is a cost of doing business, and provision of such should not be determined based on the profitability of providing the accommodation.  Pharmacies did not consider the cost per prescription when they provided male and female bathrooms, made sidewalks and doorways wheelchair accessible, posted handicapped parking signs, or paid for overhead lighting so that sighted people can see products better. These were all assumed to be part of the cost of doing business, and this accommodation is a similar cost. This legislation will not place an undue burden on any pharmacy since a variety of solutions and price points are available.

**Available Options to Pharmacies:**

**Walgreens Talking Pill Reminder**

<https://www.walgreens.com/store/c/walgreens-talking-pill-reminder/ID=prod6211860-product>

Average retail cost online is $10, which means the pharmacy cost before mark-up is probably less than half that.

**Optiphonic** **by AccessAMed.** Pharmacy pricing was not available online, but a Home Starter Kit was advertised. Each Digital Audio Label will record a 60-second message and can be re-recorded as many times as the battery lasts, which is a minimum of 400 message repeats. The Home Starter Kit includes Docking Station with Text-to-Speech Software, the USB Cable, and 10 Digital Audio Labels. Price: $125.

**WayAround** is not designed specifically for the pharmacy application, but for those not familiar with RFID tags, you can compare this with ScripTalk tags. Tags are approximately $1 each, and consumers would be able to read it only with a smartphone. Pharmacies would need a dedicated smart device to program labels. <https://www.wayaround.com/shop/>

**ScriptAbility by En-Vision America** provides general cost information for pharmacies. They have tiered pricing, which is designed to give the greatest discounts to pharmacies willing to provide the service at any location upon request, right where the patient needs it most, close to home. That would mean that mail order and pharmacies using a central-fill model would pay more. They have purchase and lease options available. En-Vision America also has a Braille printer available for producing labels for deaf/blind patients. En-Vision America provides ScripTalk RFID readers at no cost to the patient that needs one. Their tags can also be read using a smartphone app. Though every pharmacy’s needs are different, here are some general cost estimates for pharmacies choosing to lease the equipment:

Lease Option: ($200/year + cost of labels)

$200/year for ScriptAbility software & support, ScripTalk programmer and ScriptView printer.

$500 for a roll of 250 ScripTalk RFID labels

$110 for ScriptView starter kit with labels, clips, and bands (enough for approximately 300 large-print labels).

Obviously how long those supplies last will be based on the number of consumers needing the service and the number of prescriptions they each have. It is not uncommon to see a blind individual with 5-20 prescriptions. (Imagine managing 20 prescriptions without print!) Pharmacies can opt out of having one of the printer/programmers, which will mean that they are providing an audible label only, but the lease rate will stay the same. That ends up being $16.60 per month for the lease, just slightly more than a subscription to Amazon Prime, plus the cost of the labels.

**Provide safety to blind, low-vision, and print-disabled Ohioans.**

Cosponsor the Accessible Prescription Bill. Contact Mike Leiterman, National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, Legislative co-chair at 540-656-0597 or email leitlaw#@ gmail.com.