

NEW YORK STATE SENATE

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****PRESS RELEASE****

Skoufis Calls for Legislation to Empower Pharmacists and Ease Healthcare Burden During Coronavirus Pandemic

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley) co-sponsored legislation that will help empower independent pharmacists during the Coronavirus pandemic and also ease the burden on the larger healthcare industry. He is calling for immediate passage of this essential bill.

Bill [S5092](#) authorizes pharmacists as qualified health care professionals and allows them to complete the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) waived testing under their own practice, removing a significant barrier that currently requires them to hire a medical director -- something that most local pharmacists can't afford to do. CLIA waived testing allows for the screening and treatment process to be completed during a single encounter, improving access to care, counseling, and overall patient outcomes.

"As we see our hospital beds fill up with people testing positive for Coronavirus, the capacity of our providers is going to be tested and we need to come up with innovative ways to ease that burden," **said Senator Skoufis**. "This bill will give independent pharmacists the ability to test for the flu and other illnesses to help rule-out COVID-19 and ensure that hospital beds are reserved and resources are used for those who need them most."

Steve Moore, President of the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York said, "We thank the bill sponsors and Senator Skoufis for bringing attention to this incredibly timely bill. While CLIA waived tests may not be immediately available for COVID-19, existing CLIA waived tests could be used to confirm or rule out other conditions such as seasonal influenza and in turn, ease the burden of an already stressed healthcare system. As some of New York's most accessible healthcare professionals, pharmacists are a natural fit for CLIA waived testing privileges and we look forward to working with other stakeholders to bring these tests to our patients and communities."

Senator Skoufis is dedicated to addressing this public health crisis in a timely and effective manner. Just this week, he signed onto a [bill](#) that would crack down on price gouging of consumer medical supplies during a public health emergency. Additionally, last week, the Legislature acted swiftly and approved \$40 million in emergency funds for the Department of Health to hire additional staff, purchase equipment, and obtain additional resources to combat COVID-19.

The New York State Department of Health has set up a 24 Hour Coronavirus Hotline Number: 1-888-364-3065 and [website](#).

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