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Gov. Tom Corbett is fighting to make Pennsylvania a state where small businesses can flourish, create jobs, and provide important products and services to our citizens.

The governor's recent signing of the Access to Community Pharmacy Services Law, is a big step forward in this effort, and a win for Pennsylvania consumers.

Pennsylvania has nearly 3,400 pharmacies, local businesses keeping our citizens healthy by dispensing prescription drugs and counseling customers to make sure they understand their medications, as well as making sure prescriptions can be taken safely in combination with other medications.

Pharmacists help make our state's health care system work.

Containing health care costs is also an important public policy goal, but must be balanced with providing the best care possible. These two goals began to collide in recent years, as more and more health plans cut deals with large, mail-order pharmacies to provide prescriptions at reduced cost.

While good for consumers' wallets and holding down insurance costs, this is bad for consumers' health care and Pennsylvania's economy.

Patients can't talk to mail order pharmacies about individual health care concerns, such as whether a prescription should be taken with food. The mail order company doesn't know whether the prescription will combine safely with the patient's other medications. For many people, just having the peace of mind that a trusted, local health care professional is concerned about their well-being makes all the difference. A recent study showed consumers, when costs are similar, prefer dealing with a local pharmacy over a mail-order firm by a four-to-one margin.

Pharmacies employ 122,000 Pennsylvanians. These key, local businesses buy supplies and services from other local firms. Community pharmacies pay more than \$1.1 billion annually in state and local taxes, supporting education, public safety, and other important services.

This issue had been debated in the Legislature for 15 years. Finally, because Gov. Corbett understands how important this is to Pennsylvanians' health care and to keeping and creating jobs in our state, it is now law.

The legislation requires health insurance plans, both private and government run, to provide the same benefits and costs for consumers to get prescriptions at local pharmacies, as for those who use mail order pharmacies. Retail pharmacies must agree to accept, from the insurer, the same pricing and terms as mail order companies. If they do, local pharmacies can compete fairly for customers business.

This common sense law levels the playing field, which has been increasingly tilted away from our local pharmacies. The law protects consumers by requiring the same terms for both retail and mail order pharmacies, and keeps costs consistent for health plans. Gov. Corbett is working every day to keep good jobs in Pennsylvania and make our state attractive for new businesses. As our population ages, the need for pharmacies to provide access to prescriptions and health care advice that only local, trusted pharmacists can provide, will increase.

Gov. Corbett's signing of this law says to Pennsylvanians he will continue to fight for the greatest choice in health care, while also keeping costs down. To the pharmacy industry, the governor's ability to get this law passed says Pennsylvania welcomes your business and your jobs in our state.

If you would like to submit a comment, please email st-press@pa.gov.