

Boston Medical Center

c/o Melissa Shannon

One Boston Medical Center Place

Boston, MA

02118

November 6, 2023

William Anderson

Office of the General Counsel

Department of Public Health

250 Washington Street

Boston, MA

02108

***RE: 105 CMR 700.000 Emergency Regulations***

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of Boston Medical Center (BMC), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on *105 CMR 700.000 Emergency Regulations* to implement the recent statutory authorization for pharmacists to prescribe hormonal contraceptives. As the largest safety-net provider in New England, our hospital’s mission is to provide exceptional care, without exception to all patients. BMC delivers about 3000 babies a year and counsel countless patients on their birth control options. Our patients are disproportionately low income and people of color. 75% of the babies delivered at BMC Black and/or Hispanic. In turn, BMC is the birthplace of 1 in 7 Black births and 1 in 13 Hispanic births in Massachusetts.

BMC is grateful the state has expanded access to reproductive health care by allowing pharmacists to prescribe and dispense hormonal contraceptive patches and self-administered oral hormonal contraceptives. Below please find our comments, questions, and recommendations related to *105 CMR 700.000 Emergency Regulations:*

700.004(B)(15)(b)(1) – Pharmacist Training

BMC supports requiring pharmacists to complete a training program before prescribing and dispensing these medications. Additional information is needed to clarify how pharmacists will provide proof of said training. It is unclear what this process will look like and who will be responsible for enforcing that training is completed before pharmacists prescribe and dispense these medications.

700.004(B)(15)(b)(2) – Patient Screening Tool

Our clinicians are eager for more information to better understand the patient self-screening tool’s clinical content. It is our hope this tool is clear, straightforward, and user-friendly. This tool should also be available in multiple languages to ensure all patients are able to easily complete the self-screening. At BMC, we are proud to serve an incredibly diverse community – approximately 70% of our patients identify as people of color and 30% of our patients speak a primary language other than English. All of our patients should be able to easily utilize this tool to access hormonal contraceptives via pharmacists should they choose to. Further, we are looking to understand more on the purpose of the tool and its connection to the role of pharmacists. We are interested in what questions the screening will ask, whether pharmacists will receive the answers, and how this tool will be utilized.

Other Comments to Consider Regarding Implementation of *CMR 700.000 Emergency Regulations*

It is our understanding that pharmacists may need to enroll as a MassHealth providers in order to ensure reimbursement for hormonal contraceptives they prescribe and dispense to MassHealth members. Further information on this process, including details on how to enroll and any costs of enrollment, should be distributed widely in order to prepare pharmacists and eliminate any barriers to these medication for MassHealth members.

Further, we request more information on the decision to require patient consent in order for pharmacists to notify primary care or reproductive healthcare providers of the prescribing and dispensing of these medications. A patient's provider should know of any change in medication or refills for a medication. Pharmacists currently provide this information to providers who care for the patient without patient consent. This change could lead to a fragmentation of care, where the medication information would only be present in the pharmacy system and not the patient’s electronic health record that reflects the patient’s overall care.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer comments regarding these emergency regulations. Should you have any questions about our input, would like further detail or have any feedback for us, please do not hesitate to reach out to Andrea Pessolano, Senior Manager of State Government Advocacy, at andrea.pessolano@bmc.org.

Sincerely,



Melissa Shannon, JD

Vice President of Government Advocacy