



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FLORIDA PUBLIC OPINION POLL: PATIENTS OVERWHELMINGLY WANT UNFETTERED ACCESS TO MEDICATION, PHARMACIES OF THEIR CHOICE WITHOUT PBM MIDDLEMEN INTERFERENCE**

*Newly released Mason-Dixon Public Opinion Poll Confirms the Majority of Consumers Insist on keeping Neighborhood Pharmacies, Oppose Insurance Mandates that Require them to Use PBM-Owned Pharmacies, and Don't Like Health Insurance Companies owning Retail Pharmacies*

TAMPA, FL (August 17, 2020) -- A new public opinion poll released by Jacksonville-based Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy, Inc. confirms what the state's community pharmacies have been saying all along: consumers want access to the pharmacies of their choice, they don't want to be steered to pharmacies owned by pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) middlemen, and 95% of consumers surveyed demand that neighborhood pharmacies must stay in business.

The pharmacy section of the poll was commissioned by [Small Business Pharmacies Aligned for Reform](#) (SPAR) a coalition of independent pharmacies across the state intent on protecting patients' right to choose their pharmacies and keeping prescription drug costs affordable. SPAR is focused on stopping the secretive but harmful practices of PBMs, who engage in difficult-to-pin-down revenue generation schemes that short circuit the free market while placing additional burdens on patients and pharmacists.

The Mason-Dixon poll was conducted between July 20 - 23, 2020. Some 625 respondents, pulled from a base of registered Florida voters interviewed in person by telephone, answered a series of questions including three related to the right of patient choice and access to prescription medications. Polling methodology included access to Florida voters by "landline" or mobile phone numbers.

Questions consisted of the following:

- **Do you support or oppose allowing health insurance companies that have a financial interest in a large chain pharmacy to pay their own pharmacy more for a prescription drug than they pay an independent neighborhood pharmacy for the same drug?** Results indicated more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents *opposed*

supporting health insurance companies that have a financial interest in large chain pharmacies and their health insurance's unfair payment practices which hurt neighborhood pharmacies. These unequal payment practices are a main contributor to local pharmacies' fiscal inability to remain in business, a situation that creates monopolies in areas across the state and ultimately raises prescription prices due to lack of competition.

- **Do you support or oppose allowing health insurance companies to encourage or require their patients to purchase prescription drugs at large chain pharmacies that they own or control?** Results showed 84% of those polled *opposed* allowing health insurance companies to steer or require the use of large chain pharmacies, which benefits the health insurance company and not the consumer. 88% of African-Americans and consumers over the age of 55 surveyed strongly oppose this self-interested dealing which isn't legal for hospitals or physicians, but is allowed with prescription drugs, whose prices continue to skyrocket.
- **Do you believe it is important or not important to keep independent neighborhood pharmacies in business as an alternative to large chain pharmacies in order to maintain patient choice regarding where they purchase their prescription drugs?** An overwhelming 95% of those polled including 98% of female respondents said it was important to keep independent pharmacies in business to maintain patient choice, price and access.

“The polling clearly demonstrates the public's desire to remain in the care of their neighborhood pharmacist of choice,” said independent West Cocoa pharmacist Dawn Butterfield, a SPAR director. “There are about 1,300 independent pharmacies left in Florida. Consumers want choice and a level playing field where neighborhood pharmacies won't be stalked and put out of business by greedy, self-interested health insurance companies that also own large chain retail pharmacies. These corporate business tactics create monopolies in the prescription drug market that violate consumers' rights to choice and true cost savings based on competition between businesses. The fact that 98% of women surveyed, who many times are the decision-makers when it comes to their family's healthcare needs, opposed these practices and feel it is important that their local pharmacies stay in business is a major indicator that change at the legislative level is crucial.”

SPAR leaders say they will continue to fight for Florida patients and their community pharmacies through consistent advocacy, working with local legislators, and educating the public on the unfair practices of the large pharmacy chains and PBM practices that force them out of business. For more information about SPAR, visit [SPARFL.com](http://SPARFL.com).

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