

Date of Hearing: August 3, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Chris Holden, Chair

SB 1259 (Laird) – As Amended June 13, 2022

Policy Committee: Business and Professions

Vote: 17 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill expands existing authorization for a pharmacist to furnish specified opioid overdose reversal drugs without a prescription to cover any federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved opioid antagonist, in accordance with standardized procedures or protocols.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Negligible costs to the Board of Pharmacy and the Medical Board of California.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

SB 1259 ensures pharmacists can distribute more innovative reversal agents, otherwise known as antagonists, that are faster and more effective to reverse overdose in cases involving fentanyl. The Centers for Disease Control released a report for 2021 stating there was a record number of overdose deaths in the United States, reaching nearly 108,000. Additionally, the number of fentanyl-related overdose deaths has also climbed to nearly 70% of this overall number. Under current law, pharmacists can furnish naloxone, a common opioid antagonist. SB 1259 updates California's prescriptive authority statute to equip pharmacists with the ability to distribute the most appropriate and effective opioid antagonists to the public.

2) **Naloxone Hydrochloride and Other Opioid Antagonists.** Naloxone hydrochloride is an opioid antagonist, which means it blocks the effects of opioids on the central nervous system, stopping the effects of an opioid overdose, such as suppressed breathing. Naloxone can be administered by an intravenous injection, intramuscular injection, or nasal spray (under the brand name Narcan). Naloxone was approved by the FDA for the treatment of opioid overdose in 1971 and is available as a generic medication. Because naloxone is relatively simple to administer and does not pose a significant risk to the patient, it can be used by lay people with minimal instruction.

The manufacturers of Narcan are in the process of seeking approval for new rescue medication that, while similar to naloxone hydrochloride, is a chemically distinct form of

opioid antagonist. This bill seeks to ensure that as new opioid antagonist drugs become approved by the FDA, they will be available as naloxone hydrochloride has been.

- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 1535 (Bloom), Chapter 326, Statutes of 2014, permitted a pharmacist to furnish naloxone hydrochloride pursuant to standardized procedures and protocols developed and approved jointly by the Board of Pharmacy (BOP) and the Medical Board of California (MBC).

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