

PRESS RELEASE

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COUNCIL PASSES SAFE RX ON FIRST READING

MEASURE WILL PROTECT DISTRICT RESIDENTS FROM UNETHICAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG MARKETING TACTICS

Washington, D.C. – Today, the D.C. Council voted 7-6 to pass the “SafeRx Act of 2007.” The measure will protect District of Columbia residents from several potentially harmful prescription drug marketing practices. Among other things, the legislation will require the licensure of pharmaceutical representatives and prohibit them from providing knowingly false information to physicians.

“I am pleased that this Council placed the health and safety of our residents ahead of the profits of the pharmaceutical industry,” said Catania. “Around the country, governments are waking up to the reality that the current ‘anything goes’ system of pharmaceutical detailing places their citizens at risk.”

Pharmaceutical representatives, called “detailers,” account for a large share of the marketing costs of prescription drugs. Some estimate that there are currently 100,000 detailers peddling drugs today. Detailers have been known to resort to questionable methods, including providing gifts and meals to doctors, in order to promote their drugs. This has the potential to influence doctors’ prescribing decisions in ways that have little to do with the best interest of the patient. *SafeRx* will require detailers doing business in the District to be licensed and held to a professional code of conduct. Those who violate these standards will be fined and could have their license revoked. The bill will also require detailers to have an appropriate educational background.

“Detailers have come to play a huge role in our healthcare system, and it is time to start treating them as healthcare providers,” said Catania. “The current system promotes the use of the latest, most expensive drugs at the expense of the best, most effective ones.”

In addition to regulating detailers, *SafeRx* prohibits the use of private prescription data for marketing purposes without the prior consent of a physician. The bill also creates an academic detailing program to educate doctors on the latest developments in pharmaceutical research. Finally, the bill prohibits members of the District’s Medical Advisory Committees from receiving gifts from pharmaceutical companies.

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