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STATE SENATOR

Assembly Committee on Health
Public Hearing, May 20, 2015
Senate Bill 74 and Assembly Bill 96

Chairman Sanfelippo and committee members, thank you for taking the time to meet today. I am very pleased to present this legislation this morning. Senate Bill 74 and Assembly Bill 96 address a recent problem facing optometrists and consumers. Optometrists in Wisconsin can currently prescribe Schedule III, IV and V drugs. For the last 25 years, optometrists were able to prescribe hydrocodone combinations because they were classified as a Schedule III drug.

That changed this fall when the federal government moved hydrocodone combinations from Schedule III to Schedule II. This move has prompted action at the state level here in Wisconsin and many other states. Simply, this bill would restore the long held ability of Wisconsin optometrists to prescribe hydrocodone combinations regardless of its Schedule.

This is a straight-forward bill that addresses a very real problem in Wisconsin. In the current legal landscape, an optometrist prescribing hydrocodone could be stripped of his or her license. Given that many of these optometrists have been prescribing hydrocodone combinations for years that is a tough pill to swallow.

Moving beyond the actual text of the bill, I am proud of the process that occurred in the months leading up to today's hearing. Back in October, a constituent brought this issue to my attention. Since then, I have worked with the optometrists to craft a bill that restores their ability to prescribe hydrocodone combinations without impacting any broader prescribing powers.

Many of the people supporting this bill put in the time to work with other stakeholders to ensure that we had the best bill possible and I look forward to hearing from some of these people a little later, but would be happy to address any questions you might have first.