



Mr Ted McEnery
Clerk to the Committee
Special Committee on Covid-19 Response
Houses of the Oireachtas
Leinster House
Dublin 2

8 July 2020

Dear Mr McEnery,

Re: Presentation on behalf of Irish Community Pharmacists

When the current Covid-19 public health emergency arose, community pharmacies were deemed an essential service and were required to remain open. This was at a time when very little was known about this illness and simply opening the doors to the public was frightening for many. When many GP practices up and down the country closed their doors and moved to phone consultations only, supported by suitably generous State funding, pharmacists were the only community-based health profession that remained open and accessible, devoting their limited resources to providing medicines, services and care to patients and the public.

The unavailability of GPs meant that people turned to their local pharmacists with their health issues and pharmacists took on huge increased responsibilities in addition to their normal heavy workload. Now pharmacy teams are stretched, their finances are in critical condition and the pressures on the sector are becoming unsustainable. Our research shows that overall costs of dealing with the demands of Covid-19 have soared, with many pharmacies not in a position to absorb those costs and struggling to pay their wholesalers for medicines for their patients. The IPU has received numerous calls from distressed pharmacists who report that they have hit credit limits on their wholesale accounts and, as a result, have been told they will not be receiving any further orders until the outstanding balance is paid down.

If a second wave of Covid-19 hits, pharmacies will once again be called upon to serve our communities. We have serious concerns over the ability of the sector to maintain its current levels of service over the coming months and consequently it is essential that our concerns are addressed in advance of such a scenario.

On behalf of our members, who number over 2,200 community pharmacists working in 1,800 pharmacies across the country, we ask that time is allotted to the Irish Pharmacy Union to address the Committee as soon as possible, so as we can outline serious issues relating to pharmacies' ability to continue serving their communities. We ask that you circulate this letter to the members of the Special Committee on Covid-19 Response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D O'Loughlin', is written over a horizontal line.

Darragh J O'Loughlin
Secretary General