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Kisha Christian's Board of Pharmacy Nomination Advances to Full Legislature

Rules and Judiciary advanced Dr. Kisha Christian's nomination to the full Legislature after she outlined plans to expand pharmacists' services, establish point-of-care testing and travel vaccination standards, and further strengthen its Board of Pharmacy.

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Dr. Kisha Christian. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE.

The Senate Committee on Rules and Judiciary approved Dr. Kisha Christian's nomination to the Virgin Islands Board of Pharmacy on Friday, advancing her appointment to the full Legislature for further consideration.

During her confirmation hearing, Dr. Christian outlined plans to modernize pharmacy practice, broaden the services pharmacists may provide and establish territory-wide standards for point-of-care testing and travel vaccinations. She also pledged to address potential conflicts associated with serving as both a pharmacy owner and a member of the board that regulates pharmacies.

Dr. Christian traced her professional experience from working in local pharmacies and earning a Doctor of Pharmacy degree in 2004 to establishing and expanding Neighborhood Pharmacy.

She told lawmakers that this was not the first time she had been asked to serve on the Board of Pharmacy. When the opportunity previously arose, she was “fully immersed in building the strong foundation” for her pharmacy while also serving on another health-related board.

With the opportunity presented again, Dr. Christian agreed to serve.

She acknowledged that her ownership of a pharmacy could raise questions because the board regulates pharmacies, but argued that her experience would be valuable.

“I believe it is one of the strengths I bring to this board,” she said.

Dr. Christian said she has a “firsthand understanding of the realities that pharmacists and pharmacy owners face...the regulatory requirements, the staffing challenges, and the responsibility of caring for patients while running a compliant and accountable business.”

She promised to “commit to the highest standards of ethics and transparency” and said she would recuse herself from any matter that “presents a conflict of interest, or even the appearance of one.”

Her vision is to “help modernize pharmacy practice throughout our territory while ensuring that patient safety remains at the center of every decision we make.”

One of her priorities is to “help our pharmacists practice at the top of their education, training, and licensure.”

Dr. Christian testified that pharmacists are “among the highly trained and most accessible healthcare professionals in any community,” but said outdated statutes and regulations “limit them to only a fraction of what they are qualified to do.”

Expanding the services pharmacists may provide, she said, could allow the territory to make better use of their training.

“We can ease the burden on our physicians and our hospitals...” Dr. Christian said.

She also intends to work with the Legislature and the Board of Pharmacy to “establish a territory-wide standard for point-of-care testing and travel vaccinations.”

Dr. Christian reminded lawmakers that pharmacies elsewhere in the country can test patients experiencing symptoms of influenza, strep throat or Covid-19 and provide treatment. Travel vaccinations are “another area where pharmacists can safely and conveniently serve our residents,” she said.

Establishing those services in local pharmacies would “help close a healthcare gap in our territory, reduce unnecessary hospital and emergency room visits, and bring timely, affordable care closer to the people who need it.”

Working with the board, Dr. Christian hopes to submit legislation that would give the Board of Pharmacy the “okay to do stuff like the point of care testing and expand from there.”

Senator Kenneth Gittens said Dr. Christian has been working closely with his office on legislation “which seeks to expand services that our pharmacists can offer in the territory.”

Lawmakers were also reminded of Dr. Christian’s continued advocacy for pharmacies to be exempted from gross receipts taxes. Based on the discussion during the hearing, the issue is expected to come before the Legislature in the near future.

“A next colleague is working on such,” Senator Clifford Joseph said.

Dr. Christian also wants to “create and support policies that strengthen our pharmacy workforce and expand access to care for every Virgin Islander...”

She said she intends to advocate for a “dedicated line item appropriation for the Board of Pharmacy,” arguing that dedicated funding would strengthen the board’s ability to fulfill its responsibilities.

Following favorable consideration by committee members, Dr. Christian’s nomination now moves to the full Legislature.