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Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas Announces Settlement with Walgreens after 18-month Investigation and Unprofessional Conduct Prosecution

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For immediate release

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Montpelier, VT – Today Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas announced the Vermont Board of Pharmacy has approved a substantial fine as part of a settlement between the Secretary of State's Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) and Walgreens, the national pharmacy chain and Vermont's largest chain pharmacy. The \$275,000 fine is the result of a myriad of complaints, an 18-month investigation, and subsequent prosecution regarding the corporation's practices across the chain's Vermont locations.

"Vermonters rely on pharmacies as part of our health care, from accessing vaccines to filling critical medication prescriptions," said Secretary Copeland Hanzas. "I am proud of the work our OPR investigators and attorneys have done to hold Walgreens accountable and to ensure safe conditions for patients and pharmacy staff. I am thankful for the Vermont Board of Pharmacy which upheld OPR's public protection goals today. This is a big win for Vermont consumers."

Charges were initially filed in June 2022 in response to 70 complaints regarding unsafe conditions across Walgreens' 32 Vermont locations. OPR investigators, visiting every one of the corporation's pharmacies in the state, documented untenable working conditions for pharmacists, medication and vaccination errors, controlled substance storage violations, and a trend of unexpected store closures without notice.

"Our Office's primary responsibility is to ensure that the public's health, safety, and welfare are protected," said Kevin A. Rushing, Director of OPR. "Our goal in this case was not necessarily punitive, but remedial. This settlement is a strong consequence of Walgreens' business practices, and it codifies remedial measures taken by Walgreens Corporation in response to the investigation. Those measures ensure the needs of their staff are met and Vermonters are protected."

"This is a great outcome for Vermonters, for our OPR team, and shows the importance of professional regulation," said Secretary Copeland Hanzas. "I hope it will set a precedent to help create better outcomes for pharmacy patients and staff nationally as well."

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