Digestive Disease National Coalition

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February 1, 2017

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Alaska State Capitol
4th Ave and Main Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for Alaska Senate Bill 32

Dear Chair Costello and Chair Wilson,

On behalf of patients suffering from digestive diseases and the physicians who treat them, Digestive Disease National Coalition (DDNC) respectfully urges you to support SB 32, which includes provisions to improve communication between prescribers and pharmacists in regards to biosimilar medications.

DDNC represents the major professional societies concerned with digestive diseases in order to further our goal of improving the quality and accessibility of health care options for patients. Biologic medicines, including biosimilars, are expanding treatment options for patients with digestive diseases, and we are advocating for their safe arrival into the market. For the sake of our patients, it is important that the entire medical team, including physicians and pharmacists, communicate about the proper course of treatment. This bill would facilitate that communication, ensuring that our patients receive the best, most thorough care.

Because of the complexity involved with manufacturing biologic medications, there is no way to create the "generic" medications that are so common in other drugs. While the development of biosimilars—which are similar to their innovator biologic

medication, but not exactly the same—is important for creating robust choices for patients, there are safety issues that must be addressed. The best way to address these concerns is through clear communication between prescribers and pharmacists. SB 32 creates a framework that will ensure that there is transparent, open communication between prescribers and pharmacists, reducing the chance of a biologic substitution causing serious side-effects.

With the first biosimilars already on the market, it is crucial that we act quickly to ensure that there are clear guidelines for prescribers and pharmacists. We strongly urge you to sign SB 32 for the benefit of those who suffer from digestive illnesses and those who treat them.

Sincerely,

Ralph McKibbin, MD
President

CC: Members, Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Members, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee