



February 1, 2017

Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol Room 504
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for SB 32 – An Act Relating to Biological Products

Dear Chairman Wilson and Chairwoman Costello:

The Alliance for Patient Access (AfPA) would like to express support for SB 32, which allows for the substitution of biological medicines when certain conditions are met. The legislation as introduced contains the patient safety principles that AfPA member physicians have identified as critical for safe access to biosimilar medications, notably physician communication of substitution, and is worthy of your support.

AfPA is a national network of more than 800 physicians with the shared mission of ensuring patient access to approved therapies including prescription pharmaceuticals, biologics, and medical devices. Since 2011, AfPA has convened the National Physicians Biologics Working Group (NPBWG) as a home for physicians interested in policy issues relating to access to biologic therapies.

NPBWG members identified key principles that biosimilar substitution must meet to ensure patient safety and promote prescriber confidence. They are as follows:

1. FDA designation of a product as interchangeable before it may be substituted for a prescribed biologic.
2. Pharmacist communication to the prescribing physician and patient any substitution within a reasonable timeframe.
3. Physician ability to specify no substitution or dispense as written.

SB 32 contains these safety provisions, most importantly the physician communication requirement. This provision helps ensure a complete medical record and facilitates the best medical response to a patient's adverse event. AfPA is pleased that SB 32 will allow for appropriate substitution while containing measures to implement these safeguards.

The Food and Drug Administration has already approved four biosimilars and may soon approve interchangeable biosimilar medicines. AfPA supports making potentially less costly medicines available to patients and physicians, but all efforts must be made to create policies that balance access, safety, and cost. SB 32 provides a quality pathway for biosimilar medicines by maintaining communication safeguards. As such, AfPA urges you to support this bill in its current form.

Sincerely,

Brian Kennedy
Executive Director

Cc: Members, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
Members, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee