Nancy Merriman
4983 Cape Seville Drive
Anchorage AK 99516

February 9, 2017

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

Senator Natasha von Imhof
Vice Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
State Capitol Room 514
Juneau AK 99801

Re: Testimony, SB 32. Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Dear Chair Wilson and Vice Chair von Imhof,

I am writing to provide constructive comment on Senate Bill 32, "An act relating to biological products; relating to the practice of pharmacy; relating to the Board of Pharmacy; and providing for an effective date".

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 32. I am one of the patients who would be directly and negatively affected by the implementation of this bill, should it be passed as written.

I have an array of chronic auto-immune conditions that are treated with biologic medications. I have tried four different brand-name biologic drugs – given by injection or infusion – over the course of fifteen years. I have developed life-threatening allergic reactions to some; others interact adversely with other medications I take; some are simply ineffective. I have landed on one which is working adequately – for now.

SB 32, as written, would allow the pharmacist – not my physician – to decide to substitute a "biosimilar" drug for the band-name biologic. And only requires that the pharmacist notify my physician up to three days after the substitute dispensing is done. This is unacceptable. This practice would put me in harm's way – and be counter to my physician's directive, which has been shaped and tested over 15 years of dealing with my co-morbidities.

I understand that the pharmacist has to notify the patient of the substitution, but if a less-well-informed patient is presented with the option, they could understand it in the same as getting a generic drug instead of name brand. And, that, in the case of biologics, is simply not true. Biologics are proteins generated from living organisms, and biosimilars are not "bio-same". They are <u>different</u>.

Language could be changed in this bill to make it safer for patients and more respectful of the doctor-patient relationship, as follows (added/changed language is bolded):

> * Sec. 5. AS 08.80.295 is amended by adding new subsections to read: (c) Except as provided in (d) of this section, if an interchangeable biological product exists for a biological product prescribed to a patient, the dispensing pharmacist or the pharmacist's designee shall communicate to the prescribing practitioner information regarding the **proposed** biological product **that would be** provided to the patient, including the name and manufacturer of the biological product. The communication **must be provided and authorization obtained from the prescribing practitioner** ~~**must be provided within three business days after dispensing the biological product**~~ **prior to dispensing the interchangeable biological product. The communication may be provided** as follows:

I appreciate your consideration of these comments, and invite you to contact me for further information or clarification.

Sincere regards,

Nancy Merriman
Nan.merriman@gmail.com
907-360-0270